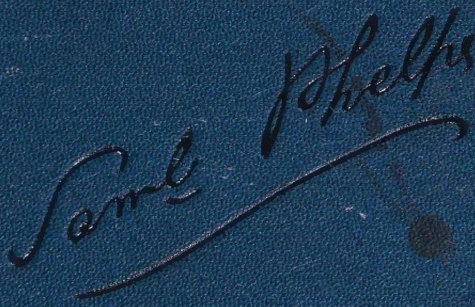

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PHELPS IN 1876.

From a Photograph by Elliott & Fry.

MEMOIRS

OF

SAMUEL PHELPS

BY

JOHN COLEMAN

Author of "Curly: An Actor's Story"

ASSISTED BY EDWARD COLEMAN

(WITH PORTRAIT)

London
REMINGTON & CO PUBLISHERS
HENRIETTA STREET COVENT GARDEN

1886

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"Honest and hearty, howso curt and gruff,
None knew but to respect the sterling soul
To learn that deep down in his gnarlèd stuff
Lay a soft core beneath the rugged bole.
Farewell to him, and honor to his work,
Done years ago, but not yet passed away;
Whose growths in unexpected places lurk,
To bless and cheer, to solace and to stay."

TOM TAYLOR.

To

ESTHER A. PHELPS,

IN RECOGNITION OF HER LIFE-LONG DEVOTION

TO HER FATHER,

AND

IN MEMORY OF THE LOVE THE

AUTHOR BORE HIM,

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED.

New Year's Day, 1886.

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"Last scene of all
That ends this strange, eventful history."

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PREFACE.

During the period of our long and friendly intimacy Mr. Phelps loved to beguile the time by relating the varied and romantic experiences incidental to his early struggles and strange vicissitudes of fortune.

In recounting them I have preserved, as nearly as possible, the actual form and sequential order in which they were related. No mere cold and lifeless words, however, can give the faintest idea of the quaint humour, the rugged pathos, the flashing eye, the quick play of feature and of fancy which impermeated and irradiated every sentence — evoking smiles one moment and tears the next — anon "setting the table on a roar."

I dare to hope that this brief record—written by one who knew him long and loved him well—

of the life and achievements of the foremost representative man (after Macready) of his time and calling will not only pleasure those who knew him and who cherish his memory, but will not be altogether without interest to those others who appreciate earnest purpose and heroic struggle in every stage of life.

INDUCTION.

THE MEINENGERS IN JULIUS CÆSAR AT DRURY LANE—THE DIVINE HELEN—THE WRITER'S FIRST NIGHT AT OLD DRURY—SHERIDAN KNOWLES' PLAY, "THE SECRETARY," AND PLANCHÉ'S "FORTUNIO"—JOSEPH PAXTON, "GARDENER"—JULIUS CÆSAR AT "HER MAJESTY'S OWN ROYAL VICTORIA THEATRE"—TWO BOYS, CHARLES CALVERT AND ANOTHER — COMMENCEMENT OF THE PHELPS AND WARNER *régime* AT SADLERS WELLS—FAREWELL BANQUET TO MACREADY—PHELPS' FIRST AND LAST APPEARANCE IN YORK—FIVE-AND-TWENTY SHILLINGS A WEEK, AND FIVE-AND-TWENTY POUNDS A NIGHT —SHADOWS OF THE PAST.

A few years ago I went with Charles Reade to Drury Lane to see the Meinengen people in "Julius Cæsar."

When the play was over, as we were about to leave the theatre I saw, in the vestibule, a tall and stately lady, who had been supremely lovely in her youth, and who, to my thinking—since "Mind is the

brightness of the body, lights it when years, its proper but less subtle fire, begins to dim"—has gained an added beauty in her maturity.

I had not seen her since the time the Dutch players acted at the Imperial, when she, Toole, and myself formed three units, amidst a select audience of a dozen, in the stalls.

While endeavouring to recall how many years had elapsed since I first played Romeo, Orlando, Claude Melnotte, and Charles Surface with her, she approached and said —

"A charming old theatre, is it not?"

"Especially to me," I replied, "since it was here that I saw my first play in town; and, would you believe it? that I can recall at this moment, as clearly as when I heard the line uttered, a beautiful young creature making music, while she murmured:

"'A maid should be an icicle.'"

"Good gracious!" she exclaimed, with the faintest flush of pleasure, "is it possible that you remember that, all these years?"

"Perfectly; it was the first night of a new play by Sheridan Knowles, the last, I believe, he ever wrote. It was called 'The Secretary,' and you were the heroine."

"If I remember rightly it was a poor play," she said.

"I thought," I replied, "it was a noble one, for it revealed to me a new world—a world of poetry and beauty."

At this moment I was brought to earth by her husband (why do goddesses descend to men of mortal mould, I wonder?), who came to escort her to her carriage.

"The divine Helen," for it was she herself, drove away; so did Charles Reade, as for myself I hailed the first hansom, and, as I bowled along homeward, recalled my first impressions of my dear old friend, Samuel Phelps.

The Meinengens had supplied one link in "Julius Cæsar," the lady had supplied the other, indeed, the first one, in "The Secretary."

According to the well-grounded axiom of the "survival of the fittest," I suppose "The Secretary" must have been a dull play, for it has never been heard of since its first production, except once, when Charles Pitt and Sam Butler (Phelps' former manager) acted in it at the Theatre Royal, Manchester.

It was founded on a novel of Grattan's, called "Highways and Byeways." The time is that of William the Third, and refers to some plot against the "little Dutchman's" life. The "little Dutchman" on that occasion was a big one; I am rather

inclined to think Ryder was His Batavian Majesty. The company were all big men, except Elton. Macready was Colonel Green; Anderson, Wilton Brown (the Secretary); Hudson, the Irish comedian, was a young light comedy Lord, whose name I can't remember; George Bennett was the Duke of Gaveston; Elliot Graham, a giant six feet two or three, played some small part or other; Helen Faucit and Mrs. Warner were both in the piece, and Phelps played Lord Byerdale, who was "a villain of the deepest dye." Yes, that was the first time I ever saw him, and an atrocious villain I thought he was. Beyond the "icicle" speech, the villany of Phelps, and the interest which surrounded Anderson (who appeared a veritable Apollo), I remember nothing, save that Macready, who was engaged in the conspiracy, made some touching appeal to Anderson; that he replied, offering to lie down and die for Macready, or something of that kind; that he dropped into a chair, and, falling forward upon the table with his head on his arms, burst into a mighty passion of tears; and that I began crying, too, out of sheer sympathy.

I fear, however, I displayed sad want of taste for a sucking tragedian, inasmuch as I remember far more clearly the after-piece. It was Easter Monday, and it was not only the first night of a new play, but

it was also the first night of the first burlesque I ever saw, the famous extravaganza of "Fortunio and his Seven Gifted Servants," written by the ever genial and accomplished J. R. Planché, whom I was destined to know intimately hereafter.

I can remember, as though it were yesterday, when the curtain rose. Hudson (who was an insolvent king) sang a parody on the well-known song, "In the days that we went gipsying," &c., to this effect:

> "In the days that we got tipsy in—a long time ago,
> We drank champagne from glasses long,
> And hock from glasses green,
> In the days that we got tipsy in—a long time ago."

I remember, too, Monsieur Jacques, Morris Barnet; he was the impecunious Baron Dunover. Best of all, I remember Priscilla Horton as Fortunio, filling the stage with sunshine whenever she appeared. I can hear her magnificent voice now, as she sang:

> "My father dear, oh! rest thee here,
> While I do put a light, silk pair of tight
> *Etceteras* on, below.
> Oh! if I look but half as well in male attire,
> As he I saw the other night upon the wire,
> Oh! what an angel I shall be!"

Then came her naughty sister (also disguised as a boy), a lady whom I remember chiefly by her marvellously beautiful legs.

Charles Selby, capital comedian and prolific

author, was an Emperor somebody, and the redoubtable Tom Matthews, or W. H. Payne—I am not quite sure which—was one of the gifted servants, endowed with a preternatural "twist," who, to my astonishment, by some occult process, devoured the whole of the bread in the Royal bakery.

Oh! night of golden dreams—of rapture and enchantment, never to be recalled! From that time to this I have never seen a child at the play for the first time but I have envied him!

A gentleman who sat next me in the pit seemed interested—perhaps amused—at my unsophisticated admiration of the play and the players. He appeared to know everything and everybody, and was very communicative.

As we left the theatre he asked me which way I was going.

When I replied "To Westbourne Green," he said, "Jump in, young shaver; I'll give you a lift as far as Portman Square."

With the ingenuousness of youth, I confided to him my name and calling, and then modestly inquired his name and occupation.

"Oh, I'm a gardener," he said, "and my name is Joseph Paxton."

When next I heard that name there was a handle

to it. Joseph had become Sir Joseph, at or about the year of the first great exhibition.

The same year I saw Mr. Phelps at "Her Majesty's Own Royal Victoria Theatre."

The occasion was an exceptional one; it was for the benefit of George Bennett, the tragedian, known so long afterwards at Sadlers Wells under the Phelps and Greenwood *régime.*

The play was "Julius Cæsar." Vandenhoff was Brutus; Phelps, Cassius; Sheridan Knowles, Mark Antony: Cæsar, George Bennett; and Portia, Mrs. W. West, a slender, delicate, fair-haired creature, whose portrait is still to be found in Cumberland's Edition as the other Portia in "The Merchant of Venice."

This lady has long "moved over to the majority," but on the morning of the recent Chatterton Benefit at Drury Lane, a few months ago, I saw her husband, a hale, hearty old gentleman of ninety, who told me that he walked twelve miles a day, and beguiled his leisure by compiling a history of the drama, commencing his labours at a period of 500 years before the Christian Era!

The same day the youthful William Woolgar (Mrs. Mellon's father), ætat. eighty-four, airily informed me he was actively engaged in preparing his reminiscences for publication.

Truly actors are a long-lived race.

"The mightiest Julius" was enacted by John Dale the unfortunate tragedian, who *débuted* at Covent Garden as Virginius, under Osbaldiston's management, and who opened and shut the same night. He made an enormous hit up to the fourth act; in the next, while engaged in the strangulation of Appius Claudius, one half of Virginius' beard came off, leaving his face bearded on one side and bare on the other. From that moment poor Dale's fate was sealed, and the tragedy ended amidst a chorus of howling.

To return, however, to the play. Phelps had very much the best of it in the acting; his rugged, fiery, and impetuous mode of attack carried everything before it.

Vandenhoff was stately and turgid, while, as for Sheridan Knowles, he had a brogue as thick as butter. The oration over the body of Cæsar was delicious. The opening lines he introduced after this fashion:—

> "Frinds, Romans, counthrymin, lind me your ears,
> I come to bury Caysar, not to praise 'em!"

I must not, however, forget Popilius Lena, enacted by a certain popular pantomimist, who, like the late lamented Herr Von Joel, was, "in consideration of former services, always retained on the establishment."

For "napping the slap," sliding on butter, stealing sausages, or handling a red-hot poker, "Joey" was still a second Grimaldi, but his accomplishments stopped short at the Shakesperean drama.

The cast of "Julius Cæsar" is a very heavy one, and the unfortunate clown was pressed into it for this Popilius Lena, who has only two lines to say in the murder scene of the third act. The poor little man, who was almost as broad as he was long, was "made up" as an ancient Roman, with a scratch wig, which he had borrowed for the purpose from the comedian of the company. The crowded house, the unaccustomed costume, the novelty of the position, and, above all, the name of Shakespere disconcerted the poor pantomimist.

As he stood at the wings trembling Knowles came up, and accosted him cheerily with —

"What's the matther, Joey, my boy? What's the matther?"

"Oh! it's this blessed Shikspere of your'n, Muster Knowles; he is giving me fits. If it was 'Hot Codlins,' now, or 'Tippyti-witchet,' or a broadsword combat, or a hornpipe, I should be all there, but I never could sling Shikspere!"

"Don't be afraid, my boy, don't be afraid; it's only a couple of lines, you know."

"I know that, Muster Knowles, but they're such plaguey hard lines! 'I wish your henterprise may

prosper!' As it is, I don't know whether I'm on my head or my heels now, but when I gits on the stage among all them six-foot tragedy Jacks—Oh! Jerusalem! Wot's the 'henterprise,' anyhow?"

"Why, they are going to kill Caysar, and you wish them through with it."

"What! kill John Dale?"

"Exactly."

"Oh! that's their little game, is it? I wish they'd kill him right out; he's always sittin' on me with his beastly tragedies!"

At this moment the prompter cut in with —

"Stage waiting, Joey; on you go!"

The wretched clown, in an agony of stage-fright, gasped—

"Oh, Lord! what am I to do? What am I to say?"

"Oh, say anything, only get on!" replied the prompter, shoving him on the stage.

Just as the unfortunate pantomimist reached the centre he caught his foot in his toga, and down he went on his nose. When he got up Phelps, Vandenhoff, and Bennett glared at him savagely. The laughter subsided, and a solemn silence ensued, amidst which the noble Popilius looked round to see that no one was listening, then, beckoning the con-

spirators around him, and putting his finger to the side of his nose, he said, confidentially —

"I vish yer luck!"

The yell which arose on all sides at this ingenuous expression of sympathy, and the portentous grimaces of the enraged tragedians, perfectly paralysed the poor little man, who looked hopelessly round for a moment, and tottered towards the wing; but ere he could make his exit a wag from the gallery called out —

"Never mind Shikspere, Joey; give us 'Hot Codlins!'"

This was the most striking effect of the night; even the tragedians yielded to the general infection, and laughed as poor Joey bolted, exclaiming:

"Oh, b— Shikspere! I wish he'd never been born!"

After a time, however, this unfortunate breakdown was got over, and the remainder of the performance was received with interest, if not with enthusiasm.

At the end of the play there was a call for Phelps, whereupon Vandenhoff presented himself, and some ruffian in the pit, attired as a butcher, roared out —

"Put your head in a bag; we don't wan't you, old stick-in-the-mud—it's Phelps we wants!"

Whereupon Vandenhoff retired, glaring at his insulter with classic disdain.

When Phelps appeared in modern attire the audience didn't know him, nor did I. He had made up for Cassius with a dark beard and a bald wig, in which he looked a man of fifty-five; when he came before the curtain, he didn't seem more than thirty.

After this there was a call for Knowles, who evidently had been to the Victoria before. Presently he came on, dressed in a vivid green Newmarket coat, with huge brass buttons and accompaniments in the shape of tightly-strapped trousers of Scotch plaid, a costume which displayed most prominently a figure the salient points of which resembled the body of a blue-bottle fly, and the legs of a spider.

"My Bhoys," said the poet—"I mane, Ladies and Gintlemen,—I'm glad to be amongst my owld friends, the Victorians, onst more. By my honour, y're the finest augience I ever acted to in the whole coorse of my life! God bless you, my childhren!"

I wonder whether young playgoers are as ardent in the pursuit of the play as I was in those days? I walked all the way from Westbourne Green to the New Cut and all the way back, to see my Shakespere that night.

On Monday, May 27th, 1844, the memorable

Phelps and Warner management commenced with "Macbeth," and that morning two boys waited upon the tragedian at the stage-door of Sadlers Wells, beseeching an engagement to bring them on the stage.

One of the boys was the late Charles Calvert, the other was myself.

Phelps appeared, at that time, a fair young man of thirty, though I know now he was considerably older. He had a profusion of light brown hair worn after the fashion of Macready, in huge bunches (yclept by the irreverent "Newgate knockers") over his ears. His eyes, at all times a serious drawback to his facial expression, were so pale as to be almost colourless, and were certainly almost indistinguishable on the stage. His nose, like Macready's, was of a strange composite order, the mouth and chin firm and well-cut, brow square, and well balanced, face oval, figure a little over middle height, slender rather than sturdy, voice deep and resonant. Whether by accident or design I cannot say, but he certainly was always tinged with the Macready manner.

He was very gracious to us, and advised us both to go back to school. I don't know whether my companion followed his advice: I only know I did not.

When next I saw him it was at the farewell banquet given to Macready, at the Hall of Commerce, in Threadneedle Street, when Sir Edward Lytton Bulwer presided, and nearly every eminent man in the world of art and letters was present.

Thanks to the especial courtesy of Charles Dickens, I was myself enabled to be there.

Phelps was to have returned thanks for the drama, but at the last moment, he "funked, turned tail, and bolted!"

After that time, I saw him in everything he did at the Wells, except "Love's Labour Lost" and "Pericles," the last of which he told me was his greatest success. We had frequently been in communication with each other; indeed, he had repeatedly offered me engagements to act at Sadlers Wells, but my star was then in the ascendant in the great provincial towns, and I could make as much money in a night in the country as he offered me for a week in London; hence it happened that I never had the good fortune to serve under his banner.

He was married at an early age, and he spoke of his marriage as being an unmixed blessing.

He was always a home-bird—too much so, for he rarely or ever went into society. It was easy to see the weight of Mrs. Phelps' influence over him—he was guided by her every wish, her every whim.

After they were settled in town, and once had a home, she was never separated from him a single day. She accompanied him to the theatre nightly, and never suffered any one to assist in dressing him except herself.

Although there was no lack of filial reverence, all the family seemed to regard him as the spoiled child of the house. At home nearly every trace of the tragedian disappeared. Although naturally petulant and irascible, at his own fireside he was a jovial, genial, boon companion, never weary of recounting his youthful struggles and misadventures.

The family, when I first became acquainted with it, consisted of father and mother, three sons and three daughters. The eldest son, Robert William, was a barrister, and had just received the Government appointment of Chief Justice at Saint Helena, for which he was about to set sail in a few days. Alas! poor fellow, he never returned. He died of typhoid fever, leaving a widow and three children.

Mrs. Samuel Phelps long predeceased her husband, and his second son, poor Ned, a handsome but erratic youth, well known in the provinces, at Sadlers Wells, and Drury Lane as a promising juvenile actor, but chiefly to be remembered for his performance of Faust to his father's Mephistopheles at old Drury, was taken next, leaving behind him two or three

children and a young widow, best known by her maiden and professional name as the sprightly and accomplished Miss Hudspeth. Sarah, the second daughter, a charming and engaging woman, who was married to a wealthy manufacturer of Preston, died two or three years after her brother Edmund.

Although Mr. Phelps' declining years were solaced by the devotion of two of the best of daughters, who for his sake remained single, it can scarcely be doubted that these cruel bereavements left an aching void in that affectionate heart which time could never heal.

My business relations with Mr. Phelps commenced during my management of the York Circuit, where he came to fulfil a series of engagements.

Upon these occasions he was invariably my guest, and one summer he went over with his daughters, the late Mr. Tom Taylor, and myself to the Isle of Man, where he made holiday with us for some three months.

It was principally during this period, and during my frequent visits to Camden Road (to which he removed on the death of Mrs. Phelps), that he related the various reminiscences hereafter recorded.

On the subject of his early life he was very

reticent, merely stating that he was born in 1804, at Plymouth Dock, as Devonport was then called.

His father was a prosperous wine merchant, whose sons received their education at Doctor Reed's classical school at Saltash.

One of the boys devoted himself to commercial pursuits, another graduated at Cambridge, took holy orders, distinguished himself as a mathematician and as the author of a standard work on optics.

This gentleman, the Reverend Robert Phelps, D.D., was, and is still I believe, master of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge.

Samuel Phelps was apprenticed to a printer at Plymouth. Having duly served his indentures he came to London to seek his fortune.

As a boy "Sam" was a member of an amateur corps at Devonport. *Apropos* of which, during the time he was with me at the Queen's, one morning, when he came to my office to speak with me on some subject, a crusty old man from the theatrical draper's was awaiting for orders.

When the tragedian left the room the old fellow growled, "Humph! you don't know me now, Mr. Sam; of course not—'tain't likely; but fifty years ago we was brother hamatoors, we was, and acted together at Plymouth Dock, and now you are the great tragedian, and me in the alarming sacrifice

business. For all that, I've acted Mercootio to your Romeo, and very well I done it too. Ah! it's a rum world."

Upon arriving in town young Phelps speedily obtained employment as reader and compositor in the office of a London journal on which Douglas Jerrold was engaged.

Both the lads were of an aspiring turn of mind —both wanted to be actors, both took lessons out of their work hours, in Latin and mathematics, from a clever but eccentric old Dutchman. When they had served their time, each went in different directions—the one to become a great author, the other to become a great actor.

Phelps *débuted* as an amateur in one of the private theatres, as Earl Osmond, in Monk Lewis's wild and extravagant drama of "The Castle Spectre." It may appear strange that the future apostle of the legitimate should have selected this "high-falutin," double-breasted, old crusted specimen of "force shall effect what love denies" ruffian for his opening, especially when it is remembered that John Kemble, when the play was originally produced by Sheridan, declined the part, and elected to play, out of compliment, it is said, to the house of Northumberland, the milksop Percy, instead.

In the next chapter he will himself relate in his

own words how he got launched in the country as an actor of utility, to do "high, low, Jack, and game," or anything the managers thought proper to entrust him with.

When fulfilling an engagement with me in York, at the zenith of his fortunes, to his great delight some old playgoer sent him a playbill, dated Easter Monday, 1828, and recording his first appearance in the city, under the management of Mr. Sam Butler, a famous tragedian in his time.

'The Master's' opening part on that occasion was the Sentinel in "Pizarro," and his next Captain Crosstree in "Black-Eye'd Susan."

On the occasion of the present visit we opened with "Othello;" he was the Moor, and I played Iago.

He had never been in York since his first-born saw the light there.

Tired as he was, and dangerous as it was for him to go out in the cold night air, after so arduous a task—for he was then past sixty-five—when the play was over, he insisted on taking me round to Stonegate, where he pointed out in the moonlight the room in which his eldest child was born.

"Ah!" said he, "many a time have I seen *her* standing there, looking down upon me when I came

in in the morning, and when I went away at night. That was five-and-forty years ago! The season was over here, and we had to go to Leeds. I was obliged to leave her behind me, because she was near her time; it wouldn't run to coaching; I used, therefore, to start on 'Shanks's mare,' over Leeds bridge every Saturday night as soon as the play was over, and get to York as the Minster bells were calling to church on Sunday morning, and as regularly as they tolled twelve on Sunday night I started off and walked back to Leeds, arriving just in time for Monday morning's rehearsal.

"Yet, amidst it all, how happy we were, we two, boy and girl together!

"I can see her now, in her plain white muslin dress, her great eyes shining like stars, her face lighted up like the moon herself. Every night when I went away she used to stand there in the window yonder and look at me to the last!

"Ah! I was much happier then at five-and-twenty 'bob' a week, with her to share it, than I am now, when I get half the house every night!"

With that he hurried home as if in a dream.

If it be true that "the most perfect herald of joy is silence," then he must have been happy.

When we got to the Theatre House I could not induce him to taste bite or sup.

He sat and smoked his cigar, and said never a word.

Evidently he had lost himself in the past.

Visions of life's morning, of the time "when Love shook the dewdrops from her glancing hair," had come back to the old man.

The loved, the lost, the distant, and the dead were around him and about him; as with a strange light in his eye, and a strange tremor in his voice, he bade us "Good-Night."

PART FIRST.

ADVENTURES DURING FOURTEEN YEARS IN THE COUNTRY—1823 TO 1837.

"the story of my life . . . .
I ran it through, even from my boyish days,
To the very moment that he bade me tell it:
Wherein I spake of most disastrous chances,
Of moving accidents by flood and field
Of hairbreadth 'scapes . . . . .
And 'portance in my travel's history."

*** As these reminiscences would lose half their charm by being narrated in the third person; in the majority of instances I shall let Mr. Phelps speak for himself, always premising that I am absolutely dependent on my memory, and cannot be responsible for dates.

PART FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

FIRST ENGAGEMENTS.

By Rail from Derby to Lincoln, *viâ* Gainsboro'—Looking Back Half-a-Century—First Appearance as an Amateur: Earl Osmond—Douglas Jerrold—First Appearance as an Actor—Open and Shut in a Week—First Provincial Engagement—The Sack—Matrimony—Return to Town—A Model Manager—Macbeth and the "Cream-Faced Loon"—Dame Marshall—Louth and Back—Lost in a Fog, and—but the Reader will Find the End of the Journey at the End of the Chapter.

We had been acting at Derby, and were on our way to Lincoln. He was very jolly, laughing and talking, when the train came to a standstill, and the porters called out 'Gainsborough.' In an instant his face became clouded and troubled.

"So that's Gainsborough!" he slowly remarked.

"Fifty years ago there was no railway to Gainsborough."

"'The Spanish Fleet could not be seen, because the Spanish Fleet was not in sight.' There were no railways anywhere fifty years ago," I replied.

"Oh, yes," he said. "It is more than fifty years since Huskisson was killed before the eyes of Fanny Kemble, and in sight of the Iron Duke, at the opening of the railway from Liverpool to Manchester."

Then he lit a cigar, and did not speak another word till the end of the journey.

That night, after supper, as he settled down to his tobacco and a glass of punch, I commenced—

"I suppose this is your first appearance in Lincoln?"

"Yes," he replied, "but not in Lincolnshire. I made my first appearance in this county nearly half-a-century ago."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. I had dabbled a little in amateur theatricals down at Devonport, but that didn't count for much. When I became really stage-struck, I made my first amateur appearance under the name of Philips, as Earl Osmond, in 'The Castle Spectre' (then a very popular play amongst amateurs), at the Rawston Street Theatre, Clerkenwell, where I paid five guineas for the privilege of

making a fool of myself. Douglas Jerrold, who was foreman in the office where I was reader, belonged to a theatrical family, and affected to be an authority on all matters pertaining to the drama. I asked him to come and see my *début.* As he was a born critic, and loved to use the knife, he accepted the invitation with alacrity, and held a *post-mortem* examination on the play and the players.

"Next day he maintained an ominous silence. When we were going out for dinner, as we walked down Lombard Street, I asked him what he thought of Osmond.

"'Think of him?' he replied. 'I think he's a burglarious, ruffianly, murderous beast, who deserves to be hanged without benefit of judge or jury.'

"'If it comes to that,' said I, 'so do Richard and Macbeth.'

"'Bah!' roared he. 'They're made of gold—that idiot is made of lead and putty.'

"'Anyhow,' I inquired, growing desperate, 'what did you think of me?'

"'H'm!' said he. 'You worked very hard, and, I suppose, must have sweat a good deal. In fact, I really thought by the time you had finished the play that your "solid flesh" (not that you have any to spare)

> "Would melt,
> Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew."'

"'You're very clever,' I replied; 'but if you've nothing smarter than that to say, we needn't prolong the conversation.'

"With that I turned away.

"'One moment,' said he, sharply. 'Have you really made up your mind to chuck up the shop and go on this wild-goose chase?'

"'I have,' I replied.

"'Very well,' he continued; 'don't say afterwards I didn't warn you.'

"'Warn me!' I exclaimed. 'Do you mean to say that I shall never make an actor?'

"'No. I don't mean to say anything of the kind. You *will* make an actor—but,' snarled the little viper, 'you'll make a d—d bad one! When you've learnt to move like a man and speak like a Christian, and got rid of your Devonian dialect, when you've had ten years' practice — if you're not starved to death in the interval — you'll succeed, if you've luck, in getting thirty bob a week in some second-rate country theatre. And now, go to the d—l your own way! Good morning!'

"And off he went in one direction, I in the other.

"This was not particularly reassuring, but after I'd another shy with another set of amateurs in

Catherine Street (to which, by the bye, I did not invite Jerrold), I arrived at the conclusion that I was an actor ready made.

"Having succeeded in getting an engagement at eighteen shillings a week at the West London Theatre (now the Prince of Wales), in Tottenham Street, then under the management of old Beverly, I thought my fortune was made, and threw up the shop at once. I opened in Desmoulins, in "The Prisoners of Lyons," and, I may say, shut in it, inasmuch as at the end of the first week I was informed that my valuable services were no longer required—from which you will doubtless infer that I did not set the Thames afire by my performance of the gallant Captain of Gendarmerie.

"After this I loafed about for some time, trying to procure an engagement; but it was a deuced difficult thing to get on the stage in those days, I assure you.

"Fortunately I had saved a few pounds, or I don't know what would have become of me.

"At length, one morning my heart was gladdened with the news that a fellow whom I had met at the West London had the offer of an engagement with Huggins and Clark, at Pontefract, for juvenile business, at a guinea a week. As he couldn't go himself, he transferred the engagement to me. It

was to commence as soon as I could reach my destination.

"The journey was a twister, but I didn't think of that—nor did I pause to reflect that I didn't know one of the parts, and that I hadn't a single property. No! I accepted the engagement there and then.

"When I got to Pontefract I found myself announced for Captain Galliard, in 'X. Y. Z.,' for Joseph Surface and Orlando, two of the longest parts on the stage—moreover, two parts in two plays I had never even seen, and of which I did not know a single line.

"Having only one rough and tumble rush through both pieces with people who, knowing the plays and the 'business' by heart, gabbled through their parts like parrots, I didn't reap much benefit from the rehearsal.

"Having no properties, I looked an awful guy. Of course I made a most heavenly mull of both parts, and as the inevitable consequence, immediately got the sack. My sentence was, however, commuted from capital punishment to penal servitude.

"Huggins said whatever I might do hereafter, at present I was utterly disqualified for the line of business for which I had engaged—and a sense of

truth compels me to admit that he was right. It was a very different thing, studying one part in three months among amateurs, to playing two new parts a night among actors.

"Clarke proposed that I should remain for 'utility,' at a slightly reduced salary. 'Half a loaf is better than no bread.' I jumped at the proposition, and remained for a considerable period in this little company, visiting a lot of small towns in Yorkshire, enacting anything I could get, and acquiring some crude knowledge of the rudiments of the art.

"It was during this engagement, while receiving the munificent stipend of eighteen shillings a week, that I took to myself a wife. It was a love match —we were boy and girl—but that is not a thing to be talked about.

"Soon after our marriage the company was disbanded, and I had to look out for another engagement; but as it was summer-time, and as there was no likelihood of my getting a berth till the autumn, I made up my mind to return to town. For all the good it did me I might as well have remained in Yorkshire. I danced attendance daily upon the agents, on Kenneth, in Bow Street, on Sims, at the Harp, opposite to the Pit of Drury Lane; but although I turned up punctually, day after day, nothing turned up for me. These continual dis-

appointments made me dreadfully crestfallen and disheartened, and I began to fear that Jerrold was right after all. My poor lass begged and prayed of me to go back to the office. I think I should have done so, but I couldn't endure the prospect of encountering the little beggar's viperous tongue. *Apropos* of him, he struck out a new path, and after some bitter struggles found himself famous as the author of "Black-Eye'd Susan," and other popular dramas.

"Heart-breaking as was the prospect, there appeared nothing for it but to go back to the reading-room, and abandon my ambitious aspirations. I had almost made up my mind to do so, when one day, while hanging about the Harp, I came across a fellow of the name of Hay, who afterwards became a famous comedian at Exeter and Plymouth. Over a glass of beer he told me that he was then on his way to an engagement at Brighton. The day before he had left Abbott's Company in Lincolnshire. They were located at Gainsboro', and he was quite sure that they wanted a sharp young fellow like myself.

"'Cut this game,' said he, 'you'll never get an engagement here to the day of judgment—make the best of your way to Gainsboro'. Stay. I'll give you a line.' And he wrote me an intro-

duction to the manager, there and then. 'Now, hook it at once, and if you can't manage the coach fare, get on to the great North Road, pad the hoof for twenty or thirty miles, till the mail overtakes you, and ten to one they'll give you a lift the rest of the way for a few shillings. Good-bye, and good luck to you.'

"When I got home of course *she* wouldn't hear of my proposed journey. We had never been parted since our marriage, and she was convinced I should be robbed and murdered on the highway. I soothed her down, and pointed out what a desirable opening it would be. Of course we couldn't doubt that I should be immediately snapped up by the manager —that I should take the provincial public by storm, &c. She was even more convinced than I was that I had only to be seen to be appreciated; so at length she yielded to my arguments, and it was settled that I was to start on Monday morning.

"It was then Thursday, and the first thing was to hold a consultation over our finances, which were very low indeed. I couldn't take an engagement without my 'props,' and I had to ascertain how few I could do with, and how much, or rather how little, I had to pay for them. In this emergency, I bethought me of my new acquaintance, and returned to the 'Harp' to consult him.

"As luck would have it, he had been playing the interesting heroes, and was now going into the low comedy. He sold me a handful of valuable things, including a ringlet wig, for which he had no further use, for a crown. Then he accompanied me to Vinegar Yard, where we picked up a pair of russet boots, a pair of sandals, a pair of fleshings, a pair of worsted tights, an old sword, and a few other odds and ends, for thirty shillings.

"Bidding my kind friend once more 'Good-bye,' I trotted home with my purchases, as proud as a dog with two tails.

"The time 'twixt Thursday night and Monday morning was passed in alternate fits of hope and despondency, with intervals of experiments in making lace collars, cuffs, and ruffles, ballet shirts, and other little nicknacks.

"When we came to cast up accounts, at the last moment, we found we had barely two pounds left. Of course, *she* wanted me to take it all, but on this point I was inflexible. I took ten shillings, and left her the rest, and so, having previously arranged that I would send for her as soon as I got to Gainsborough, with aching hearts and tearful eyes, we parted on that memorable winter morning.

"It was a sharp frost, and bitterly cold.

"There was one comfort, I was well wrapped up;

in fact, she tied the muffler round my neck which she had herself knitted for the occasion. I stuck my sword (which was covered with brown paper, for decency's sake) through the handle of my carpet-bag, slung it over my shoulder, and away I trudged in the dark.

"At first this precious bag seemed light as a feather, but after I had walked twenty miles or more, and there was no sign of the coach, the infernal thing had become a load for a pack-horse.

"I struggled on a few miles further, and then giving it up as a bad job, came to anchor on a heap of stones by the roadside, where I lighted my pipe and awaited the coach.

"Half an hour, an hour, another half hour. Blame the coach! Would it never come?

"At last I heard the tantara of the guard's horn and the sound of wheels; the next moment she came rattling over the summit of the hill with the horses in a lather.

"Up sprang I on the heap of stones. 'Holloa! Holloa!' I shouted. I might as well have shouted to the dead, for neither the driver nor the guard deigned to take the slightest notice of my existence. The passengers did, though, and no wonder, for in my rage I started back and fell heels over head into the ditch behind. Fortunately for me, it was a dry

one. The unfeeling ruffians positively roared with laughter as they dashed by, and I was left with my head in the ditch and my heels in the air.

"The passing glimpse I caught of the coach, however, enabled me to distinguish that it was packed inside and out, which accounted for the lordly disdain of guard and driver.

"There was nothing for it but to limp on to the next town, where I resolved to stay for the night, and try my luck with the next coach the following day.

"After another drag of seven or eight miles I reached my destination foot-sore and weary. Of course my resources would not admit of my putting up at the hotel where the coach stopped, so after hunting about for another half hour I found a fourth-rate public-house called 'The Three Jolly Beggars,' where I secured a bed for sixpence. Then I made friends with the mistress, a great ample-breasted, jolly woman of fifty, with black eyes and hair, and red cheeks. This honest soul gave me a capital supper of tea, new bread, bacon and eggs for another sixpence.

"I soothed myself with a pipe before I turned in to roost, where, thinking of my poor lass, and wishing that her dear arms were around my neck, I fell fast asleep, and never woke till the landlady came and shook me up at nine to tell me that breakfast

was ready. I was out of bed like a shot. Finding myself rather stiff in the fetlocks, I improvised a tub as well as I could, and sluiced myself from head to foot. That freshened me up a bit. Then more tea, more new bread, more bacon and eggs, and they freshened me up still more.

"I had to brush my own shoes, but that didn't hurt me. When I came to settle up I made myself free of 'The Three Jolly Beggars' for two bob. That didn't hurt me either, especially as my good landlady threw me in a lunch in the shape of a couple of hard-boiled eggs, a slice of fat bacon, a huge junk of brown bread, and a pint bottle of beer. Then, bless her heart, with all sorts of kind wishes, she put me on the way, and at twelve o'clock I set off again with my sword and my carpet-bag.

"The day was fine, though frosty; and as I had no particular occasion for haste I strolled leisurely along until the coach overtook me, when I was delighted to find there were very few passengers.

"As soon as I hailed the driver he stopped. The guard leaped down, and we soon struck a bargain. Five bob for the lift, and a bob apiece for the guard and driver, would leave me with a solitary 'Roberto' at the end of the journey.

"Up I jumped and took my seat on the box. The

coachy was a smart, intelligent old fellow, and better still, a great play-goer. He beguiled the time by talking about Mrs. Siddons, the Kembles, Charles Young, Kean, Incledon, Macready, Elliston, Liston, and Matthews; and, above all, of John Emery, who was an acquaintance of his.

"When I mentioned my business at Gainsborough he became very communicative, told me that my manager (for, of course, I made up my mind that Mr. Abbott was to be my manager!) was a man of great probity, and much respected in the district, that the company were eminently respectable people, and that some of them were very clever.

"The drive was exhilarating, and by about four o'clock, when we stopped to change horses and refresh, I was as hungry as a hunter, so I said I would walk on a bit, which I did, and pitched into my luncheon. I had put it out of sight long before the coach overtook me. I don't mean to say I ate it all —but I stowed one half away in my stomach, and the other half in my pocket in reserve for an emergency.

"At last, about nine, we got to Gainsboro', and off I trotted to look out for lodgings. I soon got a couple of snug little rooms at a widow's, a Mrs. Wilkinson, for three bob a week, and went to bed after making a hearty supper on the remains of my lunch.

"Next morning I turned out fresh as paint, put on my best togs, and when I came down, quite impressed my good landlady.

"'Lord bless us, sir,' quoth she, 'why you be a real London gentleman, for sure—but thear now, thee'll be all t' better for thy breakfast. Here be a mort o' buyutiful pickled herrings, and ingins, and a pot o' tay as good as thy mistress could make, if she were here to look after thee.'

"I had been much puzzled as to what I should do with that solitary 'Roberto' (the sole survivor of my last half-sovereign), and here I was 'in a land overflowing with milk and honey' and pickled herrings. I was too discreet, however, to express any astonishment, but I promise you, I did justice to the herrings, and the savoury, though not sweet-smelling esculent with which they were profusely garnished. Before I took my departure, Mrs. Wilkinson inquired what I would like for dinner.

"'My dear madam,' I replied, in the most airy manner, 'the breakfast was so excellent that I leave the dinner entirely to you—only remember I'm neither Rothschild nor the Bank of England—so let it be as simple and inexpensive as you please,' and off I went in search of my manager that was to be.

"I found Mr. Abbott at the theatre counting the checks. Stay by the way, was it a theatre, or a fit

up? I really forget, but if it was a fit up it was a very nice one, so suppose we call it a theatre.

"When I had presented my credentials I had time to take stock of the old gentleman. He was a little rotund fellow, with a face like a ripe ribston pippin, a perky, saucy nose, bright, twinkling, merry grey eyes, a mouth and teeth like a horse, iron grey hair, mutton chop whiskers, a sort of shovel hat, white choker, black coat, black breeches, black gaiters, and black silk stockings, so please you. In fact, he only wanted a black silk apron to make him a rural dean.

"News spread apace in these small places, and he had heard of my arrival overnight from the guard, while smoking his pipe (his constant custom) and taking his nightcap of brown brandy and hot water, in the bar of the Green Dragon. I told him that I was willing and anxious to make myself useful in any department, and that if he gave me the chance, I'd do my level best with any mortal thing, or at any rate, try to do it.

"I was engaged there and then, at a salary of a guinea a week, and it was arranged that I was to open on the following night in the Third Witch, King Duncan, the First Murderer, Rosse, one of the Apparitions, one of the witches' solos, the Physician, and 'the cream-faced loon,' in 'Macbeth.' Yes,

and I did 'em too, my boy, or I suppose did for 'em. Anyhow I spoke the words, or something like them.

"But stop, let me tell my story sequentially. Before I left the theatre I wrote home (there were no electric telegraphs in those days) telling the good news, and paid eightpence postage out of my last shilling.

"Then I returned to my lodgings, and astonished an Irish stew, which I found ready and waiting. Having secured the prompt book, I set out after dinner for a walk of six or eight miles, and slipped into my parts. When I had made sure of the words, or thought I had, I came home, and with great complacency, arranged my 'props' for action on the following night.

"I don't think I distinguished myself very highly by my polyphonous performances in 'Macbeth.' The fact is, I had only one wig for the Witch and Duncan, and as I did not know much about the art of making up, I couldn't get the beastly stuff off my face in time for my changes. So there was a family likeness between the weird sister, Duncan, the Physician, and the unfortunate 'cream-faced loon.' I got through Rosse's great scene with Macduff, with only about half-a-dozen sticks. I even struggled through the Physician with but an occasional break down, but when I came to form

part of Macbeth's valiant army in the one scene, and of Macduff's yet more valiant army in the other—when I found myself coming off in one entrance as 'the cream-faced loon' and rushing on in the next as the first officer—I got so helplessly mixed, that I completely corpsed poor Hamilton, our leading man, a great strapping fellow he was—six feet high or more. The eagle's feather in his Scotch bonnet touched the border lights, which singed the tip of it. When he bade 'the devil damn me black' for a 'cream-faced loon,' and inquired, 'Where got'st thou that goose look?' I ingenuously responded, 'My lord, there are ten thousand *geese* without,' which effectually took the wind out of his sails in that situation. In the next, I came rushing on and gasped—and gasped—deuce a word could I articulate. He glared at me and hissed through his teeth—'Now then, stupid, spit it out!'

"Thus encouraged, in trembling accents I volunteered the information that —

> 'As I did stand my watch upon the hill,
> I looked towards Birnam, and anon me thought
> The wood began to move upon its *head*!'

"The bold Macbeth didn't wait to hear any more, but rushed at me, and half strangled me. He let me have 'Liar and slave!' and the rest of it

with a vengeance, and literally flung me off the stage, landing me in a heap in the prompt corner.

"Under other circumstances, of course, I should have resented this rough-and-ready punishment for my stupidity, but I was so hopelessly demoralized by my incapacity, and so conscious of my own shortcomings, that I submitted to it like a lamb; in fact, I rather fancied that I deserved all, and more than I got.

"When Macbeth made his exit, a minute afterwards, avowing his intention to 'die with harness on his back,' he went for me, sword in hand, and I think if he had got at me my professional career would have ended there and then. Fortunately, however, I had nothing more to do with him, so I kept out of the way until the play was over, and he had simmered down a bit, when I made my excuses in the best way I could. Although a little hot-headed, he was a fine, large-hearted fellow, and not half a bad actor. My apologies were graciously accepted, and soon after we became sworn chums.

"Next day my wife came down by the mail. I was at the Green Dragon to meet her. She leaped from the coach into my arms, and I was the happiest man in England.

"To do honour to the occasion, my landlady had provided a hot tripe supper, with baked potatoes, a

Welsh rabbit, and a jug of gin punch, which we enjoyed heartily, and 'shut up in measureless content.'

"Isn't it strange that such trifling details should dwell upon one's mind after all these years? Things that occurred yesterday I forget, while these things I remember as vividly as if they had occurred yesterday.

"My next parts were the 'furious Tybalt,' the Apothecary, and Friar John. I got on better with these than with my contributions to Macbeth. I fear, however, I distinguished myself most in the Apothecary, being then slender to attenuation.

"Mr. Abbott placed my wife on the free list, and she came to the play every night. She was dreadfully angry that I didn't play Romeo, feeling quite sure I should have played it infinitely better than that 'great awkward creature, Hamilton.' It must be admitted that my friend, the stalwart six-footer, was not exactly the figure for the youngest of the Montagues. Perhaps, however, it was just as well for my peace of mind, as well as for the public good, that I didn't play the lover, for the 'missus,' who had never even read the play, besides being totally unsophisticated and utterly ignorant of the routine of the theatre, got dreadfully exercised in her mind at the amoroso penseroso 'business' between Romeo and Juliet.

"She could see no necessity for it, and had she been Mrs. Hamilton (who played Lady Capulet), she would soon have sent that forward minx, Juliet, to the right-about!

"Having volunteered her opinions to this effect to a jolly old dame who sat next her in the front seats, she found her neighbour didn't agree with her; on the contrary, she thought both hero and heroine all too lovely, said she liked it 'deep,' and 'never enjoyed herself at the play unless she had a good cry.'

"The next piece was 'Pizarro,' in which I was cast Alonzo. The old lady was to the fore again, and when she knew that the pretty young creature who sat beside her was the wife of the valiant young Spaniard, who killed the wicked Pizarro, she 'declared' on to her, and in a few nights they became on very friendly terms.

"Mrs. Marshall was a farmer's widow, who had been left in fairly affluent circumstances. She farmed her own acres, and was a very shrewd, sagacious person. Having no relations of her own, and hating her husband's like poison, she took a violent fancy to us. Every afternoon we didn't act she brought her sturdy pony and trap to drive us to the farm, to take tea and supper, and to play whist, in which I took dummy to the best of my ability.

One night a terrible storm came on, and she insisted on our sleeping at the farm. Next day she and my wife arranged it between them that we were to stay there altogether—greatly to the grief of Mrs. Wilkinson, who was broken-hearted at our desertion, for she had begun to attach herself to us. I was sorry to leave her, but my poor lass had got rather peaky, and when I saw her eyes begin to sparkle, and her cheeks to bloom, I soon became reconciled to our stay at the farm. As for me, with the plethora of good living with which I was being continually crammed, I was getting fine and fit for killing, as the farmers say.

"Time passed pleasantly and quickly—too quickly in fact, for at last we got to the end of the season, and had to go to Louth.

"The dame would not hear of parting with my wife, and, as I knew she would be well taken care of, I consented to her staying behind—anyhow until I had prepared for her reception.

"Old Abbott and the ladies of the company went by coach, but the boys walked, and I walked with them. When we reached our journey's end, we found to our horror that the mail had just arrived with the news of the death of the Duke of Kent. In order to prove his loyalty, or rather in obedience to the behests of the magistrate, who was also the

Vicar—without whose permission we could not open our rural theatre—our good old manager was compelled to postpone our opening for a week! A pleasant look-out this for the poor players!

"Most of the people had been in Louth before. As for myself, I concluded to return to Gainsboro' at once. Accordingly I put my best foot foremost and walked all through the night, and got to the farm about nine next morning, where they made as much fuss with me as if I had just returned from a voyage to the North Pole.

"That week passed more quickly than any week I remember.

"I didn't tell them I must get back to Louth on Monday, because I had to make a start at five o'clock in the morning, and I knew they would have insisted on getting up to see me off.

"As soon as the clock struck, however, I leaped out of bed. It was dark as pitch, but I slipped into my clothes, sneaked out of the house, and made a start. It had been snowing overnight, and unfortunately the snow had given place to a black frost.

"Getting over the ground as well as I could, I reached the half-way house about eleven, had a mouthful of bread and cheese, a glass of mulled-ale, and a smoke. Then off I went again. What with the frost and the sharp wind, I thought the

weather was almost as bad as it could be. I was mistaken, however, for about two a dense fog sprung up—so dense and so dark that I couldn't see a hand's turn before me.

"Although we were to open that night with 'Virginius' and 'The Young Widow,' could I have been sure of making my way back in safety to the half-way house, I most certainly would have chanced it, whether we opened or shut; but miles before, I had passed the junction of the four roads, so that if actually I succeeded in retracing my steps as far back, I could not be sure of taking the right turning. To keep straight on was the wisest and safest thing to do, so I plodded mile after mile through the fog and the darkness, without hearing a single sound of life, and without encountering a solitary sign of light, or human habitation, or landmark of any description whatever. That I had lost my way was now quite certain, and every step I took might lead me into one of the bogs or quagmires of the terrible fen country, and then remembering Burbage's significant epitaph—in the Abbey, I arrived at the conclusion that no epitaph would ever be written over my nameless grave.

"The weather now began to change. The fog, without lifting or losing its density, became damp

and drizzling, and the frost beneath my feet began to melt into sludge of the consistency of pudding. It was as much as I could do to drag my feet through it.

"Presently I was drenched to the skin, and stricken as with an ague. My teeth began to chatter, my limbs to tremble beneath me. At last I could scarce keep my feet. Yet either to stand still or to give up the struggle meant death—death imminent and inevitable.

"The thought of the poor wench I had left behind nerved my heart and gave me strength and courage to struggle on for another half-hour, which seemed half a century.

"At last, having done all that man could do, I gave it up as a bad job. A few steps more and it would be all over, and then 'Exit Samuel Phelps!'

"'God help her, and take care of her, anyhow!' I gasped, as I fell forward, prone and helpless, to the ground.

"Even as I did so, at that very moment, loud and clear, and high above my head in the immediate vicinity, a silvery peal of bells rang out the chimes.

"A quarter, half-hour, three-quarters, four, then silence.

"Would it never strike?

"At last! One, two, three, four, five, six—seven!

"It was seven o'clock, and I had fallen at the very gate of Louth churchyard!

"The next instant I was on my feet. I knew my way well enough now.

"A few moments more and I was in the play-house. The boys stripped my wet things off me, rubbed me from head to foot, made me swallow two or three glasses of boiling hot whiskey-and-water. Old Abbott himself brought me not one, but two mutton chops, broiled to a turn, and a dish of tea; and with the aid of this strange, incongruous, but potent mixture, at eight o'clock I was on the stage ladling out 'Appius Claudius' as became a noble Roman. Nay, more, after the play I kicked up my heels and danced about like a parched pea, in the humours of Mandeville in 'The Young Widow,' to the delight of a crowded audience, who yelled at my eccentric vagaries. I don't think I ever played to a better audience in my life.

"When the performance was over Hamilton took me home to his lodgings, put me to bed, while his bonnie wee wife made me swallow a bowlful of gruel and sweet nitre.

"Thank goodness! when I awoke on the morrow, I found nothing worse than a skinful of sore bones to remind me of that perilous journey."

CHAPTER II.

IN AND OUT OF THE YORK CIRCUIT.

"Bill" Anderton and Edmund Kean—How Phelps came to be called "Peter," and why he Left the York Circuit—William Telbin—Grand Production of "The Battle of Waterloo"—Both Sides, French and English, Resolve to Conquer: A Free Fight—Pæans of Victory and Pans of Red Fire—A Veritable Blaze of Triumph.

When I had shown him over my new theatre at Hull, some twenty years ago, the following dialogue took place after dinner at the Victoria Hotel :—

Phelps.—"Very fine theatre, but not half so fine as the old one."

Coleman.—"How came you to know the old one?"

P.—"How? My dear boy, I acted in the old theatre before you were born.

"I made my first appearance in the York Circuit in 1827. I joined the company at Wakefield, open-

ing as Belmour in 'Jane Shore.' During the season I played Truman in 'George Barnwell,' one of the monks in 'Bertram,' Rawbold in 'The Iron Chest,' some singing walking gentlemen, and lots of utility parts.

"From Wakefield we went to Doncaster for the Leger week. The town was so crowded with sporting people that three or four of us couldn't get lodgings at less than a guinea a night, and we were glad to find shelter for the first night in an omnibus which luckily we found just outside the theatre. From Doncaster we went to Hull."

C.—"Strange; I never heard of your being in the circuit before."

P.—"Not at all strange, for my position was not up to much in those days."

C.—"Who was the leading man?"

P.—"The once famous 'Bill' Anderton."

C.—"Was that the Anderton who walked from Birmingham to Richmond to Edmund Kean's funeral?"

P.—"I believe he did; but when I met him it was fully four or five years before Kean's death."

C.—"Did you ever see Kean act?"

P.—"Ever? I should think I did."

C.—"What was he really like?"

P.—"Like, my boy? Like? He was like

thunder and lightning. Wild and extravagant, and frequently incorrect, but, as John Kemble said of him, 'terribly in earnest.' He lifted you off your feet; at least he lifted me off mine when I played 'Tubal' with him. He didn't come to rehearsal, and although Lee, his secretary, rehearsed carefully enough, I did not know where to find Kean at night, for he crossed here, there, and everywhere, and prowled about like a caged tiger. I never took my eyes off him. I dodged him up and down, crossed when he crossed, took up my cues, and got on pretty fairly, till he thoroughly flabbergasted me by hissing, 'Get out of my focus! B — t you!—get out of my focus!'"

C.—"What in the name of fate did he mean by his 'focus'?"

P.—"I'll tell you. Next moment, Lee, who was at the wing, whispered 'Higher up; stand higher up the stage.'"

C.—"I understand; his 'focus' was the foot light."

P.—"Precisely; I had got between him and it, and so prevented the light from reaching his face. With the exception of this trifling hitch the scene went like a whirlwind. When it was over he sent for me to his room, where he was, according to custom, imbibing copious libations of hot brandy

and water. Anderton was with him. They were both more than half-seas over, as in fact they were during the whole of his visit.

"'Have a glass of grog, young stick-in-the-mud,' says Kean, pleasantly. 'You'll be an actor one of these days, sir; but mind, the next time you play with me, for God's sake steer clear of my focus.'

"That was my first and last interview with the great little man. As for Anderton, they were inseparable, morning, noon, and night. I verily believe that they not only went to bed drunk, but they got up drunk. I certainly never saw them entirely sober. In Othello and Iago they were both three sheets in the wind, and yet how splendidly they played the third act, and how lion-like Kean was in the last scene."

C.—"I suppose one cannot fairly gauge either the public taste or the public culture of that period by our present standard, for in those days I have heard that everybody, more or less—principally more—got drunk daily or nightly."

P.—"I believe they did. I certainly used to think that many of our audience during that particular engagement were in a condition which led them to sympathise with their friends on the other side of the lights."

C.—"I remember in my boyhood at Port Glas-

gow hearing a distinguished Presbyterian divine, over his thirteenth or fourteenth 'go' of toddy, expatiate eloquently and in the most delicious Doric upon Kean's breaking down in Othello at Glasgow many years before.

"'By G —! sir!' exclaimed the minister, 'he was a grand little mon. Fou, sir? To be sure he was fou up till his lug! And why for no, sir? Why for no? Is a mon of genius to be tied down to the vulgar rules of ordinary mortals? I wonder what Robbie Burns, or Wullie Shakespeare, or rare old Ben, or Pitt, or Fox, or Richard Brinsley, or Christopher North, or Jamie Hogg, or even Sir Walter himsel' would say to that?

"'Sir! he was na drunk with mountain dew, or the wines of France or Portugal; but wi' the nectar of the gods, and it just made his heart too big for his puir wee body. When he let out that lang, last fareweel, like a deeing swan, why, drunk or sober, my heart went out till his.

"'Here's ta his memory. Have another toddy, sir; there's no a headache in a hogshead of it, as the Hielander said.'"

P.—"Your noble Presbyter, John, was evidently one of Christopher North's men.

"But let me get back to Anderton. He told me that before Kean opened at Drury Lane

they were great chums, and had acted together continually; that in 1815 he was in town, very hard up, that he wrote to Kean repeatedly, tried to see him, but all of no avail. At last, hearing that when the play was over he sometimes came into the 'Harp' to join 'The Screaming Lunatics,' a society of actors and other idiots, who met at intervals to give bacchanalian songs and recitations, principally for the glorification of their idol Kean, Anderton resolved to become a Lunatic too. (He was always one, only unfortunately he didn't know it). Upon being called upon to contribute 'to the harmony of the evening' he gave a series of imitations of popular actors, winding up with one of Kean, which made a great mark.

"One night, while he sat cowering before the fire, over what he called a 'dry pipe,' he heard Kean outside rowing a jarvey. The next minute, his quondam chum, half-drunk as usual, swaggered in with three or four bucks of the period, and Billy Oxbery, the low comedian. Kean was dressed in the height of fashion, a silk-lined coat, white Kersey breeches, silk stockings, and buckles on his shoes.

"He passed by without the slightest sign of recognition as he roared out 'A bowl of punch, and drinks all round!' Up arose a shout of welcome, after

which the Lunatics went for their 'lush.' Then one Lunatic gave a song, another a recitation. Presently, Anderton, who was unknown to them by name, was called upon to give his imitations.

"As he rose to respond the waiter came up, and pointing to a smashed panel immediately above his head, whispered —

"'You'd better dror it mild, or he'll be smashing your nut, jist as he smashed that there. Lucky for the last *h*imitator that the bottle landed on the panel instead of his chump.' *

"Without a word, Anderton commenced as usual. Neither Kean nor his friends took the slightest notice of his imitations. They laughed, however, consumedly amongst themselves at some spicy thing which evidently tickled them.

"When Anderton had exhausted all his list but Kean, he paused, but the Lunatics with one accord shouted —

"'Go on! Kean—Kean!'

"At the sound Kean turned round from the opposite side of the room, looked sternly at his ancient comrade, but offered not the most distant recognition.

* I believe the smashed panel is to be seen to this day, on this identical spot. An irreverent wag once inscribed beneath it —"Edmund Kean—his mark." The inscription has disappeared, but the "mark" still remains.

"Stung by his supposed disdain, Anderton let out the great speech from Bertram, beginning —

'Take these black hairs, torn from a head that hates thee.
Deep be their dye ere ransomed in my heart's blood or thine!'

"This particular imitation, which, when he told me the story, he gave for my especial delectation, was a magnificent outburst of passionate declamation, and I really thought I could hear Kean himself letting out.

"As Anderton finished, the whole room rose in a tumult, amidst which Kean sprang forward, upsetting tables, glasses, punch-bowls, as he roared —

"'What! Bill! Bill Anderton! Why you purpureal old fool; why didn't you come over to me at once? So help me—I didn't know you from Adam!'

"'And I didn't wonder at it,' said Anderton; 'I was such a ragged robin, I don't think my mother would have known me.'

"Having first stuffed him to repletion with the best the house could afford, and, as a matter of course, having filled him with gin (Anderton's favourite poison), Kean wrapped him up in his fur-lined roquelaire, took him home with him, evidently to Mrs. Kean's great annoyance, and no wonder, for both the tragedians were so oblivious of mundane matters that they went to bed in their boots.

"Next day Kean got his friend an engagement at the Coburg, provided him a spendid rig out, together with a new set of 'props,' and soon after, when he went down to Liverpool, squeezed a £20 note in his hand at parting."

C.—"No wonder he walked from Birmingham for the funeral. I think I should have done so myself."

P.—"But how the deuce came you to know about Anderton? He was long before your time."

C.—"True; but I've heard a good deal about him from Blewitt, and Tom Ousley, the poet. Blewitt met Anderton a short time before his death at Warwick and Hereford. Although a wreck, he was still a noble ruin."

P.—"He was a splendid fellow when first I saw him. He had all the makings of a great actor—fine person, resonant voice, brains, everything. It was 'The drink, Hamlet! the drink!' which cooked him, as it has cooked so many others.

"He usually began his nightly work sour and sober, stupid, and weak as water. Then commenced the process of getting drunk, during which he had fine moments—moments of inspiration—but generally by the time he reached the last act, he was inarticulate and idiotic, and found it difficult to

keep his feet. Even then, in some passages, he struck fire with a fine phrenzy that lifted the audience. Portions of his last acts of Othello, Macbeth, and Lear, were very fine."

C.—"Blewitt told me that one night in Warwick they were acting 'Othello,' and at the end of the second act Anderton inquired plaintively —

"'Have you any coppers about you, Jack?'

"'Nothing less than sixpence,' the other replied.

"'I'm dying for a drink. I can't get through the third act without one. Send for a quart of fourpenny.'"

"At this moment the prompter rang up, and Blewitt found himself on the stage for Cassio. Of course he couldn't get off till Othello's entrance.

"When Desdemona flung herself upon Othello's breast at the words, 'Let him come when he will; I will deny thee nothing,' the valiant Moor whispered his *cara sposa* —

"'For God's sake tell Blewitt to hurry up with the fourpenny, or I shall never be able to finish the scene.'

"Thus admonished by the 'gentle Desdemona' Blewitt sent out to 'The Hare and Hounds.'

The dresser got back just as Othello commenced the famous speech —

"'Villain! be sure you prove,' &c.

"Snatching the pot from the fellow's hand, Cassio ran upstairs. The speech was nearly over. Unfortunately he was at the wrong side of the stage. Anderton was, however, equal to the occasion. Catching sight of the tankard, he sent Iago sprawling round in the opposite direction, and upon the line,

'Nothing cans't thou to damnation add greater than that!'

he struggled over to the right hand, and popping his head out of sight, he seized the pewter and swallowed the foaming beverage to the last drop as he exclaimed —

"'Bless you, boy! take a father's blessing. For God's sake hurry up quick and get me another!'

"Then returning to the stage he leisurely commenced his next speech."

P.—"Just his way. I remember calling upon him one morning at 'The Shakespere,' in Humber Street, for a book of 'Virginius' in which I had to play a little part. I found him in bed, awaking from the last night's debauch.

"He roared, for he had a voice like thunder —

"'Peter, my son! have you any coppers?'

"'Nothing but twopence, sir.'

"'Well, tuppence will pay for a quart of gatter. Get it, my son—get it!

'Heaven will bless you, and make you die a good old man.'

Stand not upon the order of your going, but go at once. You young villain! do you hear? Go!!'

"Overpowered partly by his helplessness, but principally by his objurgations, I did as he bade me.

"When I returned with a huge jug of small beer he emptied the pot at a draught, and then yelled —

"'Hot coppers! hot coppers! my boy! Snakes! snakes!

> "'To have a thousand with red burning spits
> Come hissing in upon 'em!'

"I really thought I heard the beer boiling in his stomach as if it had been poured on red hot iron. Most certainly I saw a foaming vapour actually stream from his mouth like the steam puffing out of an engine, and do you know the fellow terrified me so that I actually bolted.

"Sometime after I succeeded him as leading man in Blackburn, and when 'Hamlet' was cast, old Neville, the manager, Harry Neville's father, enquired austerely —

"'Have you a pair of black tights, young man?'

"'Certainly,' I replied.

"'You're sure you have?'

"'Quite sure. Why do you ask?'

"'Because my last leading man hadn't a pair. You know Anderton, of course?'

"'Oh! yes; I met him in the York circuit.'

"'Well, sir,' continued Neville, 'when we were in Oldham, we were going to do Hamlet.

"'After the rehearsal the fellow said that he had lost his black silk tights (between ourselves, I don't think he ever had 'em to lose!), and I had to stand a sovereign for him to go to Manchester to buy a pair. On his way to the coach, he encountered a crony, who asked him to come into the "Bag o' Nails" to have a drink. Unfortunately he was always too ready to accept invitations of that kind. One libation followed another. A number of fellows were loafing about, keeping Saint Monday. He asked a lot of them to join him. Ordered a gallon of beer—another, and yet another. These loafing scoundrels swore that he was the grädeliest chap i' t'world, and, of course, the best actor. They were bäund to "gie him a leg up that neet," &c. Of course another gallon of beer followed this assurance. Then he sagely resumed —

"'"It is by no means essential that Hamlet should have silk stockings; in fact, in the time of the bard they were unknown. Worsted would do just as well."

"'"Better," roared his friends; "besides, they're bigger and stronger."

"'"That being the case, we'll have another gallon to wet 'em."

"'And so another gallon followed, with full flavoured stories, and bacchanalian songs to boot, amidst which the bold Anderton looked up at the clock.'

"'"Six o'clock!" he hiccupped, "and we begin, at seven. It is too late to go to Manchester! Here, landlady! Another gallon! and, blame my eyes, if I don't do without either silk or woollen, and black my blooming legs with burnt cork!"

"'And he did; and more remarkable still, he never played the part so well during his stay in the company as on that occasion.'"

"Poor Anderton! I wonder what has become of him?"

C.—"Dead, long ago!

"Tom Ousely was with him when he died at Stourbridge.

"'He babbled of green fields,' of Edmund Kean, and some woman whom he had loved and lost, who had abandoned and betrayed him, driven him to drink, to despair, and death!

"For four days he lay unconscious. At last, on the fifth, he was awakened by the church bells (for it was Sunday) ringing for the morning service.

"Looking round, he recognised Ousely, and feebly gasped —

'Give me to drink, Titinius!'

"The poet lifted the poor worn head on his shoulder, and gave him a draught of lemonade.

"Then he smiled and whispered —

"'Good-bye, old man; you were always a brick —always!'

"And so he drifted out into the great unknown."

P.—"Poor wretch! poor wretch!

"I believe in his time many a man of ability went headlong to the devil, thinking it was a sure sign of genius to follow the pernicious example of Cooke and Kean, who not only ruined their own lives, but those of many others—Scotch Aitken, to wit, who was one of the best actors I ever saw."

C.—"I can well believe it, for his daughter, 'daft Maggie,' as we used to call her, was the best Lucy Ashton, the best Blanche of Devon, and the best Ophelia I ever saw.

"While Anderton was to the fore, I suppose, you had little opportunity for distinguishing yourself here?"

P.—"Very little; about my only chance was Peter Simpson."

C.—"In 'Simpson and Co.'?"

P.—"Yes; the manager, old Downe, was taken ill. It was the member's bespeak, a big house; and I had to take the part at a moment's notice, and almost without a rehearsal."

C.—"Did you 'wing' it then?"

P.—"Not quite. Luckily I had seen Terry play it once or twice at Covent Garden, and I knew something about it."

C.—"How did you manage to get on without a rehearsal?!"

P.—"Oh! we ran through the lines in the green-room; and when we got on the stage I astonished everybody so much that Anderton there and then christened me 'Peter.'"

C.—"By a singular coincidence, exactly the same thing happened to Mercer Simpson, the Birmingham manager, and the nickname clung to him to the day of his death."

P.—"It stuck to me long enough, and was near driving me into the old men altogether."

C.—"What sort of an actor was old Downe?"

P.—"One of the best I ever saw. I modelled my Sir Anthony Absolute and old Dornton entirely on him."

C.—"How long did you stay here?"

P.—"On that occasion only until the end of the season. I should have gone to Leeds, but that he gave me a lot of bitter bad parts. I kicked at them, and got kicked out in consequence."

C.—"What did you do then?"

P.—"Well, luckily a berth turned up in a sharing

company at Beverley, which, as you know, is only twelve miles off. Here I got some of the leading parts to act. Robson Daniels was the manager."

C.—"A bo*w*ld spaker with bow legs?"

P.—"Yes; but a rattling good actor."

C.—"I saw him play 'Rob Roy' in my childhood."

P.—"Then you saw one of the best Rob Roys on the stage.

"Well, I was engaged to play anything, and to make myself generally useful.

"Business was awfully bad, and we had the greatest difficulty in keeping the wolf from the door. We all had to put our shoulder to the wheel, so we dispensed with carpenters and property men, and bill deliverers, and did the carpentering, propertying, and bill delivering ourselves. I escaped this last ordeal because I went in for scene painting and decorating the house, which I flatter myself I made very bright and smart.

"Our prompter looked after the properties, and his son helped him. Whenever he could get a chance, the lad came to give me a hand to grind my colours or to do a bit of priming.

"Once when he had failed to get some properties in I found him howling like a calf while the father was clouting his head.

"'Hold hard,' said I, 'don't beat the boy. What's the row about?'

"'What's the row about? I told this young viper to get in the 'props,' a penny loaf for a bread fowl, and a turnip to make lump sugar of, three hours ago, and this is what he has been doing, idling and humbugging about.'

"With that he showed me a penny box of colours and some coloured sketches which the lad had made. Then he continued —

"'What do you think of that now?'

"'I think,' I replied, 'that you are an ass, and he is a genius.'

"And so he was, for that boy turned out to be the great scene painter, William Telbin.

"After that, Bill was always suffered to come to assist me in my scene painting experiments, and I dinned it into the father's ears incessantly, until he placed the youngster in the painting-room at Manchester.

"Well, as I have said, the business was atrocious. To make matters worse, the general election came on, and then no one visited the theatre at all.

"Daniels was an active, indefatigable fellow, and full of expedients. He used to go over to Hull every other day to pledge anything he could spare, to 'raise the wind,' to enable him to distribute a few

shillings amongst us. One day he came back radiant, for he had unearthed a treasure in the shape of a manuscript of the 'Battle of Waterloo,' which had been acted at Astley's for hundreds of nights.

"'Peter,' said he to me (you see the infernal Peter had got to Beverley before me) 'our fortunes are made, my boy. The Yeomanry Cavalry are coming up on Monday week. We'll do the "Battle of Waterloo" on Wednesday, and get the gallant Yohos to come and do the rival armies.'

"'But how about the French uniforms?'

"'Oh! we'll get them to turn their coats inside out for the Johnny Crapauds.'

"'And about the scenery?'

"'Oh! you'll do that, of course.'

"'I'm not so sure about that. It depends on who is going to play "Buonaparte"?'

"'I am.'

"'What! with those legs?'

"'Now, Peter, that's ungenerous. I didn't make my legs; besides, Boney was rather bow-legged.'

"'I was not aware of that peculiarity; but bow-legged, or beggar-kneed, I play Boney, or I don't paint the scenery.'

"'You don't mean that?'

"'I do, though.'

"'Well, I think it's d—d hard!'

"'Hard or soft, no Boney, no scenery.'

"'Needs must, when—Peter drives; so go ahead with the scenery.'

"And go ahead I did. Young Telbin stuck to me day and night, and by the time the week was over we had spoiled every inch of canvas in the place.

"Daniels was a capital stage manager, and with the exception of myself, the people were all experienced actors, who knew their way about.

"The week before the Yeomanry came, we didn't open the theatre at all. The days, from early morning, were devoted to scene painting and rehearsals; the nights to a succession of tea parties and whist at each other's lodgings; and though we had nothing to drink stronger than tea, and very little to eat, we had fine, high, jolly times of it, I can tell you.

"For my part I could think of nothing else but Buonaparte. I fished out a green footman's livery, and an old coachman's hat from our slender wardrobe at the theatre, and 'the missis' faced the one with white glazed calico, and transmogrified the other into some resemblance to a Chapeau Bras.

"I had seen Gomersal at Astley's, and remembered the snuff-box, folding his arms upon his chest, crossing them behind his back, and I flatter myself I was all there in his little dodges.

"Daniels solaced himself by playing the youthful hero, a certain Corporal in the Scots Greys. Besides this he managed the Yohos, who readily acceded to his wishes, with the understanding that they were to represent the French and English armies alternately, inasmuch as it was indispensable for the French to be licked every night.

"We had all got to our last gasp when we reached the evening of our great production.

"I don't think if a shilling would have saved our lives and souls, we could have raked up so much amongst the whole body corporate. I, for one, went to the theatre with an aching heart and an empty stomach.

"That night was 'big with the fate of Cæsar and of Rome.'

"It was the bespeak of the Colonel and officers in command of the Yohos.

"When I came on the stage, dressed and made up for Boney, I could scarcely move for these worthy fellows, but I pressed towards the curtain and looked through the peephole. Thank God! the Yohos and their friends in front were packed like herrings in a barrel!

"Up went the curtain, and on went the play. Candour compels me to admit that the representative of 'The Little Corporal' did not distinguish

himself so highly as he had anticipated. If the actor failed, the scene painter was triumphant, and the piece was a great success.

"The gallant Yohos pummelled each other to their hearts' content, the vanquished of to-night making up their minds to take it out of the victors during the next performance.

"They fired their carbines right and left, until I thought they would have brought the roof down about our ears; and so amidst pæans of victory and pans of red fire the curtain fell upon a veritable 'blaze of triumph.'

"There were only eight of us in the company, and we each took a share of four pounds on that night, except Daniels, who, as manager, had two shares, and consequently took eight.

"He was a decent, thoughtful fellow, and he took the precaution to order us a hot supper at the adjacent inn. My wife was invited with the other ladies, and I promise you we polished off a cod's head and shoulders, a sirloin of beef, a boiled leg of mutton and trimmings, and left little behind except the bones. That was Wednesday night. Thursday I was dead beat, for I had been doing double duty as scene painter and actor, so I took it out, and lay in bed all day.

"Friday we had a rehearsal for the Yohos, who

had to change places with each other. That night there was a better house than the first; our shares came to five pounds apiece, and Daniels' to ten. The following Monday was the bespeak of the Conservative member, who took forty pounds' worth of tickets. Wednesday the Radicals followed suit, and they took fifty pounds' worth to outdo the Conservatives.

"Friday was Daniels' benefit, and the best night of the season. Again the 'Battle of Waterloo.'

"Then came a difficulty. The gallant Yohos, who had thoroughly entered into the spirit of the thing, remembered that, during our four performances, each detachment had been twice victorious as the John Bulls, and twice vanquished as the Johnny Crapauds.

"On the last night each side was resolved to be victorious. We tried to convince them that they could not both play the conquering game, but our arguments were in vain, and they would not listen to reason.

"At last I suggested that they should put the matter under the ordeal of copper, and toss up as to which side should be permitted to lick the other. This proposal was accepted with alacrity, and detachment A won the victory, while detachment B went away grumbling. This night was the best of

all, in fact, we turned away as many people as got in.

"Behind the scenes we found great difficulty in keeping detachment B clear of detachment A. They had both been dining and wining, and kept snarling at each other.

"At the end of the second act two or three of the officers came round and exchanged mysterious communications with the Sergeants in command, and each officer remained to lead his own detachment into action.

"Daniels, who always had his wits about him, smelt mischief. He came to me and whispered —

"'There's going to be a row, Peter. We'll cut the ladies out of the last act, and you'd better throw my Hamlet cloak over your uniform, and get them home.'

"I didn't ask questions, but went and got the girls out of the theatre immediately, and returned to my post.

"It turned out just as he had anticipated when it came to the decisive charge.

"Detachment B refused to take their licking quietly, and 'went for' detachment A with a will. 'Bloody noses and cracked crowns' were flying about all over the shop, in the midst of which realistic warfare Wellington lit a pan of red fire on

one side, and Buonaparte on the other, and the manager let down the curtain while the battle was still raging.

"A minute afterwards the combatants were hugging one another, and healing their honourable scars.

"As, fortunately, no serious damage was done, nothing would satisfy the gallant warriors but that Nosey, and Boney, and Bandy-legged Bill (as they called Daniels) should accompany them to their quarters in uniform to sup and make a night of it; and, by Heavens! a jovial night we did make of it.

"When I left for my next engagement, I thought myself a millionaire, for after paying all my debts I had more than twenty pounds in my pocket.

"I had more than that—I had youth, health, strength, ambition, and my sweet lass!

"Ah, John! What 'glorious prophets of the future are Youth and Hope!'

"*Eheu fugaces!* that was half a century ago! If one could only always be three-and-twenty!" *

* As I have previously stated in the induction, Phelps returned to the Circuit after this, opening under Butler's management at York, Easter Monday, 1828. I believe he acted again in Hull in 1829.—J. C.

CHAPTER III.

A FIRST BENEFIT.

SHEFFIELD: END OF SEASON—MINIATURE PAINTING: A FRIEND IN NEED IS A FRIEND INDEED—THE BENEFIT, "LOVE IN A VILLAGE": THE WOODS PLAY FALSE—A CROWDED AND INFURIATE AUDIENCE BEFORE, AND AN UNREASONING AND RAPACIOUS MOB BEHIND: *Deus ex Machina* IN THE SHAPE OF A BENEVOLENT DOCTOR—ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.

"AT the end of my first engagement with the Butlers in Sheffield I was left stranded, and didn't know where to turn.

"We closed before Passion Week, and there was the summer staring us in the face. I wrote here, there, and everywhere; but letters then cost at least eightpence each for postage, some even more than that, and I had to look at every shilling. Soon there was scarcely a shilling left to look at. Then I betook myself to miniature painting, of which I knew a little.

"First I got a commission or two which enabled me to stave off immediate necessities. Then I bethought me I'd paint a picture of Mrs. Nisbett, who was a beauty, as I dare say you may have heard, and a great favourite among the Tykes.

"Well, when I'd finished the picture, came the difficulty of disposing of it.

"It was the fashion of the day, and a very bad fashion it was (though not without a certain amount of *bonne camaraderie*) for the actors on the off nights to meet their friends at the various smoke-rooms of the principal hotels, and I followed suit with the rest of the youngsters. Then there were songs, recitations—a sort of superior smoking concert in fact.

"For my part—'I confess the cape'—I didn't get many good parts to act at the theatre, and I was not indisposed to let out my superfluous energies for the good of my friends at these social reunions.

"In those days I sang very fairly; and once I had accompanied the beautiful but ebullient Mrs Waylett upon a short tour in the Midlands, and sang duets with her. Upon another occasion, when in Dublin (whither I had accompanied Vandenhoff on a flying visit), in an emergency, when some one broke down, I actually had the cheek to struggle through Young Meadows in 'Love in a Village,' with all the original

music; and Mrs. Wood, who was starring there with her husband, was pleased to say I got through very decently.

"Sometimes our singing and spouting was varied with a hot supper, toasting, and speechifying, and there was a lot of benefit making.

"Of course the popular favourites had big benefits, but I didn't dare to take one. The expenses were heavy; we had to divide after twenty pounds a night, and if that didn't come in, we had to make up the amount, so I funked the attempt.

"As to taking a ticket night,* I had no ambition to be mixed up with Tom, Dick, and Harry, fiddlers, property-men, and carpenters.

"I had an intimate chum, one Dick Chudleigh, who was a man of taste, and a town councillor. I got him to come and have a look at la Nisbett. He was struck all of a heap, and, as I thought he was in affluent circumstances, I made sure he would have bought the picture at once.

"'What's the price?' he enquired.

"'Ten pounds.'

"'Well, look here, Peter' (you see I hadn't yet got rid of that d—d Peter) 'I'll send my man to bring it down to the "King's Arms" to-night, and we'll

* A night when a number of people issue tickets, and every one has half the amount of tickets he puts into the house.

get up a raffle for it. Mind you turn up at ten o'clock.'

"When I did turn up, honest Dick, God bless him, handed me over a ten-pound note on the Sheffield and Hallamshire Bank. He wanted me to come in and have a pipe, but I couldn't. I started off and ran all the way home. I could run like a lamplighter in those days, and I promise you there were high jinks in 'The Wicker' that night.

"Ten pounds, however, won't last for ever, especially when there are three or four bairns to provide for; and when we came to the end of our little hoard I was sorely exercised in my mind.

"Mind you, as soon as I touched that ten-pound note, I again wrote in every direction for an engagement, offering to go in the most subordinate capacity, and at any salary; but it was the dog days, the thermometer stood at ninety in the shade, and no one out of a lunatic asylum would dream of opening a theatre in such weather. In this emergency I thought of my friend Dick Chudleigh. When I called at his place they told me he had been at Chatsworth for a few days.

"As I walked sadly homeward, as luck would have it, the coach came rattling up the market-place, and there was Dick on the box-seat.

"As soon as they pulled up he jumped down, and I told him exactly how I was situated.

"He was a large-hearted fellow, and he tided me over my immediate difficulty.

"'We must put a stop to this,' said he; 'come and meet me here to-night, and we'll talk the matter over.'

"When I joined him at the 'King's Arms,' according to appointment, I noticed that every one seemed more attentive and considerate than usual; and as we were about to break up, the waiter came and said —

"'Mrs. Lambert's compliments, and she wishes to see you, sir.'

"When I got to the bar the landlady, a jolly old Yorkshire woman, opened fire with —

"'Sit thee down thar, sur, and have a glass of port wine negus. I'll mix it myself. Happen you'll like a slice of lemon and a dust o' nutmeg in it. Maggie, hand over that box of Havannahs. Happen Muster Phelps 'd like one. Dick Chudleigh has been telling me your good lady is ill, and the bairns are ailing, so I hope, sur, you'll not take it amiss that I've took the liberty of putting up a bottle of old port, some calves'-foot jelly, and a jugged hare for the missus, and some cakes and a Bakewell pie for the bairns; and John Ostler shall carry 'em

home with thee, an' you'll just show him t' way.'

"My heart came into my mouth, but I couldn't speak a word. The dear old lady saw how it was with me, and cut me short with —

"'Aye, aye, I know all ye'd say; but sup lad, sup, and don't waste thy wind with gab.'

"By this time Dick came to the bar window, and sang out in his cheery way —

"'Now, then, Peter, are you going to make love to Mrs. Lambert all night? The bobbies 'll be coming and turning us out, so you'd better step it if you're bound for 'The Wicker.'

"Gasping a good-night to our kind hostess, I started off with Dick, while John Ostler followed in our rear.

"When we got to my lodgings Dick dismissed the hostler, and said to me —

"'Now, look here, Peter, there need be no nonsense 'twixt you and me. I'm as hard up as you are, lad; only I've got tick and you haven't. I haven't been found out yet. As long as I can swim (and I'm afraid it won't be long) you shall float. We'll sink or swim together. Not another word. Good-night; God bless you, old fellow.'

"And he was gone before I could speak.

"I protest up to this moment I can't recall that

night without a lump rising in my throat, and tears to my eyes.

"Well, thanks to dear old Dick, and another spell of miniature-painting, we got through the summer; but when autumn fell *she* was taken ill. Heaven, however, sent us another friend in Doctor Sykes, the Theatre Doctor as we used to call him.

"What a noble old fellow he was, to be sure! I can see him now with his Herculean torso, his beautiful bald Shaksperean nob, with a fringe of short, crisp, brown curls around it, his luxuriant whiskers, his bright hazel eyes, his gold *pince-nez*, his dazzling and regular white teeth, his faultless white choker, his huge cambric shirt frill, his great diamond pin, his gold snuff-box, his spencer, his black breeches and continuations. I think I can even see his pleasant smile and hear his musical Yorkshire burr.

"So cordial and paternal was he that he always gave us the idea that we had met before in some previous Pythagorean state of existence.

"He had been in London for a few years walking the hospitals, and being, as he said, then a lonely lad, without father, mother, brother, sister, or friend, the theatre was his only comfort and consolation; even now he never kept away a single night, and it was his hobby to talk about past times, about the

Siddons' and the Kembles. He had seen Great Sarah, Black Jack, George Frederick, and Charles Young's last appearances; he had seen Master Betty, Kean, Macready, and Booth's first appearances; he had seen Miss O'Niel play Juliet; Emery, Tyke; Charles Kemble, Three-fingered Jack; Liston, Paul Pry; Braham, Tom Tug; and Vestris, Don Giovanni—in fact, I don't know whom he had not seen—while, as for dates, he was a peripatetic dictionary of dates.

"As for fees, he scorned the idea; he attended every member of the company, and he never took a fee from any one of them.

"Regularly as the day came, he came to look after *her* and the bairns, who, of course, had whooping cough, measles, and all the other complaints that juvenile flesh is heir to. For them he prescribed fresh air and exercise, and unlimited grub, tempered with brimstone and treacle; and an occasional dose of rhubarb, while, as for her, he prescribed port wine and quinine, and sent bottles of his own physic, and all sorts of nice things every other day.

"Things were beginning to look up; I had the offer of an engagement for the winter with Alick, the eccentric Scotch manager. I was to join him at Carlisle for the light comedy at thirty bob a week.

"To be sure that was a month off, and then I had to get to Carlisle, besides leaving something for her and the children until I could afford to send for them to Scotland.

"One night, at the 'King's Arms,' looking over the Manchester paper, I saw an announcement that Wood and his wife were acting at the Theatre Royal there. It was immediately after the time when the beautiful Paton's flight to a convent, her divorce from her first husband, one of the Lennox's (Lord William, I think), and her subsequent marriage to Wood, the Yorkshire vocalist, had made a great stir in the world.

"While we were all talking about the matter, and I was relating my peaceful triumphs in 'Young Meadows,' Dick Chudleigh cut in with —

"'I've an idea, Peter, you've never had a benefit. Take the theatre for a night, and engage the Woods to come and play. They're going on to Leeds, and York, and Hull; happen they'll be glad to break the journey here, and they'll fill the house, that you bet.'

"On this hint, I wrote next day to Wood, and received an answer by return of post, acceding to my proposal, and stipulating for half the house.

"Before I replied I went to see Mrs. Butler to arrange for the theatre.

"That was soon done. I undertook to pay her ten pounds for rent and gas out of the receipts, and I wrote off to Wood, closing with his terms.

"It was now Friday, and the performance was announced thus for the following Friday —

THEATRE ROYAL,
FRIDAY NEXT,
For the Benefit of Mr. Phelps,
Being the first time he has ever taken one.
The distinguished vocalists,
MR. AND MRS. WOOD,
From the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden,
Will appear as Hawthorn and Rosetta
in
"*Love in a Village.*"
The part of "Young Meadows," with the original music,
by Mr. PHELPS,
Supported by the Company from the Theatre Royal, Manchester.

"This was a modest announcement, considering I had not as yet engaged a human being except the Woods.

"Go to Manchester I must to engage people, that was certain, for there was not an actor in Sheffield save myself; but how to get there and back was the question. There was only one thing for it, to stump it. A weary walk it was there, and a still more weary walk back; however, I returned triumphant, having seen the Woods and secured my company, including a leader of the orchestra.

"Friday morning came. All the people turned

up at rehearsal, except the 'stars.' They, however, needed no rehearsals, so we went carefully through the piece, and left everything in apple-pie order for the night.

"Every one went home to dinner except myself. I was too anxious for that, so I strolled down to the box-office, which was kept at Thompson's, the confectioner's, at the church gates, to see how the booking was getting on. To my horror not a single ticket was taken, not a single place was booked! A lively look out this for the night!

"As I was wearily making my way to 'The Wicker,' I met Dick Chudleigh just getting on the coach for the Peak; he had been called away to attend on his father, who had been taken suddenly and dangerously ill. Poor Dick had troubles enough of his own just then, so I forbore to worry him with mine. Wishing me good luck, off he went to Matlock.

"When I got home I found a nice little dinner waiting. *She* stood over me while I ate it, and then made me lie down and sleep till five o'clock.

"When we got to the theatre, soon after, to our astonishment and delight we found Arundel Street almost impassable with the crowds who were waiting to get in; indeed, we had the greatest difficulty in getting in ourselves at the stage entrance.

"The doors were opened half-an-hour earlier than usual to prevent their being forced, and in ten minutes the theatre was ram-jammed from floor to ceiling.

"We commenced with the farce of 'Intrigue,' which I started, and then proceeded to look out for the 'stars.' To my consternation there was no sign of them.

"I went down to the 'King's Arms,' where they were expected to stay, but Mrs. Lambert had neither seen nor heard from them.

"From the 'King's Arms' I ran to the box office, but missed Thompson, who had just gone on to the theatre to find me.

"Hastening back there, I found him. He told me that Mr. and Mrs. Wood had called at his shop half-an-hour after I left, to see the box plan.

"When they found no places were taken, the gentleman shrugged his shoulders, the lady shrugged hers, and without a word they walked out.

"A sudden horror seized me. I ran bare-headed down to the 'Red Lion,' and rushed into the booking-office.

"My worst fears were confirmed. Seeing no sign of the probability of a 'house,' without vouchsafing a word or a sign, they had gone on by the mail to Hull!

"I fear, had my benedictions reached them, they would have taken a longer journey, by a shorter cut, to a warmer place!

"As I returned to the theatre, I endeavoured to collect my thoughts, so as to decide what was best to be done.

"Apart from our own necessities, there were all the poor people whom I had brought from Manchester, the band, carpenters, servants, the printing, posting, and gas, to say nothing of rent and lots of other things, to be paid.

"There was a house of a hundred and fifty odd pounds (the prices had been doubled), and I had an infuriate audience of grinders to deal with, who would have their money back, and might even wreck the house into the bargain!

"Well-nigh distracted, I invoked blessings, tenfold blessings on Mr. and Mrs. Wood!

"By the time I got back, the farce was over, and the people were dressing for 'Love in a Village.' My poor lass was waiting for me in the manager's room, and when I told her what had happened, though she tried to keep up her spirits, I could see it was too much for her.

"'You must give them back their money Sam,' she said; then down she fell, and I thought it was all over with her.

"Rushing to the door like a madman, I roared —

"'Send for Doctor Sykes!'

"'I'm here, Phelps,' said a voice from below.

"'This way; for God's sake, doctor, this way,' I cried.

"The next minute he was in my room.

"Kneeling beside her, he felt her pulse.

"'Nothing but a fainting fit, that's all; a little shock, or something of the sort. Unfasten her dress; here, take these scissors, cut every ligature about her, send for a little brandy, or stay! I'll bring some; she'll be all right in five minutes.'

"I carried out his instructions, and she got better in an inconceivably short space of time.

"When the doctor returned, he said —

"'Now tell me how this happened? What's the matter? Be quick about it, or there'll be a row in the house.'

"I told him everything in as few words as possible.

"'Poor girl, poor girl,' said he, 'I don't wonder that she was knocked over. What do you intend to do?'

"'What she told me—go and return the money, that's the first thing. What to do next God only knows, for I don't.'

"'Well, in any case leave her to me. First arrange with the money-takers and chequers to

return the money; next go and tell the audience the truth, then come back here and we'll see what can be done.'

"In a few minutes our arrangements were completed; then I went before the curtain, told the audience the facts, expressed my regret, explained that their money would be returned, and so, with three groans for the 'stars' and a cheer for me, they quitted the theatre.

"When I got behind I found myself surrounded by a mob of fiddlers, supers, carpenters, and property men, clamouring for payment.

"At that moment the doctor appeared on the landing of the stairs.

"'One moment, good people,' said he; 'give yourselves no apprehension about being paid. In half-an-hour's time Mr. Phelps will hold the treasury; meanwhile, perhaps you will allow him to step this way to prepare the salary list.'

"At these words they all became silent, and made way for me to go up stairs.

"'Now Phelps!' said he, 'see here are pen, ink, and paper. Don't waste time in words, put down all there is to pay and —'

"'Put down all there is to pay?'

"'Yes! it has to be paid, hasn't it?' said he bluntly.

"'Certainly, but I haven't a shilling,' I replied.

"'Do as I tell you; make out the salary list, and don't be long about it, or it will be too late to get the money.'

"The excitement had been too much for me, and if my life had depended on it, I could no more have collected my thoughts to make out that salary list than I could have walked on my head down 'The Wicker.'

"In this emergency my brave wench came to the rescue, and rapidly prepared the pay-sheet. All told, including rent, gas, and printing, it came to thirty-five pounds.

"'You are sure that will cover everything?' inquired the doctor.

"'Certain,' I replied.

"'Very well, then,' he said; 'wait till I come back.'

"He was only absent for ten minutes, but they were ten minutes of agony and bloody sweat, for the people below were becoming impatient, and when I peeped out, they glared upon me with hungry and wolfish eyes.

"At last he returned, bright and smiling, with a bag of gold and one of silver, both of which he planted on the table.

"'There you are, my man,' said he; 'now hold

your treasury, and to-morrow let me know how you get on,' then without another word he left us.

"That treasury was a joyful surprise to everybody, to none more than to the poor folk from Manchester, who had had a parlous time of it, and who had given up all hopes of getting a shilling.

"When we went to Mrs. Butler the next day to pay the rent, she said —

"'Nay lad, it isn't thy fault, so I'll take nowt but gas ; pay me a pound and we'll cry quits.'

"Off we went to the doctor, delighted to be able to return him the nine pounds we had left after paying everything and everybody.

"'No,' said our benefactor, 'keep it! You want it now; when you become a great man, and not till then, return it to me.'

"Thank God I've since been enabled to return it to him and his tenfold."

CHAPTER IV.

A JOURNEY DUE NORTH.

Shanks' Mare on a Winter's Morning—Waiting for the Coach, but the Coach Doesn't Wait: Head in a Ditch and Heels in the Air—Greta Bridge: A Slide Down the Hog's Back—Northallerton: A Sleep Without Dreams—Mine Host and Hostess of "The Swan with Two Necks"—A Linsey Woolsey Charles Surface—Lady Teazle to the Rescue.

One night at Sheffield, after the "School for Scandal," in which he had particularly distinguished himself as Sir Peter, I said—

"I suppose you have been to see your old friends to-day?"

"I wish I could have seen them, but the doctor and his wife have been dead for ages.

"Their son has made a fortune though. He is now the first physician in Cheltenham, and his daughter is married to the Earl of A."

"And honest Dick? Is he dead, too?"

"No; transported!"

"You don't say so! How was that?"

"His father got better, married again, and left every shilling to his second wife. Poor Dick got into debt and difficulties. He had been flying kites for a long time; at last he made free with the old man's name across a bill stamp, was unable to meet it, then came a burst up. Ah! it was a sad business."

"And was that the end of it?"

"No, God be praised, not quite, for he is now in Australia doing very well, a merchant in a large way, a member of the Legislative Council, and I don't know what all. Fortunately I was able to send his wife and children out to him."

"I'm sorry that he went wrong."

"So was I, poor fellow! The very last time I saw him was in this very hotel. He came to see me off to Carlisle.

"I was obliged to leave all I could with *her* and the bairns. It was Monday, and I was due at Carlisle on Friday for the beginning of the season, and Alexander had notified me that I was to open in Charles Surface, which, by the way, I had never acted.

"I had taken the precaution to send my baggage on before, so expected to find it there on my arrival.

"Dick had ascertained that Tuesday was the great Horse Fair at Greta Bridge.

"The coach, which left Sheffield at twelve, was due at four at Greta, where it would be sure to disgorge the bulk of the passengers, and the chances were that I should get a lift to the end of the journey for a few shillings.

"It had been a sad parting with the wife and bairns when I started on Monday morning.

"I was thinly clad, my boots were in a delicate state of health, and the winter had commenced earlier than usual.

"Though there was a brisk wind, the sun was shining.

"There had been a sharp frost over night, and the ground was firm for walking. Had my boots been equally firm I should have had no apprehension; but alas! I had not made my way half a dozen miles when I felt my right foot literally on the ground.

"I made a halt, took off my boot, or what remained of it.

"Fortunately I had a copy of the 'School for Scandal' (Cumberland's edition) in my pocket; so removing the few leaves which contained the part of Charles, I carefully packed the remainder of the book inside my boot, bound my pocket-handkerchief

carefully round boot and book and foot, and resumed my journey till I reached the half-way house where I broke my fast.

"After a pull at the pipe, I again set forth. By this time the wind was due north-east, and slick in my teeth; it was freezing bitterly, and the clouds were dark and overcast. There was nothing for it but to put the steam on, and I tramped away with a will till I got to Greta Bridge, that is the scene of 'Dotheboys Hall' you know.

"Poor Nicholas Nickleby couldn't have been more frozen or more dead-alive than I was when I came to anchor at the inn where the coach had to put up.

"I went boldly into the bar, and ordered a glass of mulled ale and a welsh rabbit, and as Sandie says 'bang went saxpence!' By the time I had had half an hour's rest up came the mail with the horses smoking.

"The passengers began to dismount, and, as Dick had prognosticated, the coach was half empty. I took stock of the situation, and noted that behind the boot there were two huge springs. I had previously learnt from the ostler that the passengers had half an hour for dinner while the horses were changed, so I tackled the guard at once, and presenting five bob, boldly asked him to give me a lift for the rest of the journey.

"He was a huge, cranky fellow, with a nose like Bardolph, fiery blood-shotten eyes, and a voice like a fog-horn.

"'Can't be done, young man, can't be done,' he roared; 'dooty to my employers, dooty, sir.'

"'Only to the next stage,' I entreated.

"'Tell 'ee it can't be done, and there's an end of the matter.'

"'No! there isn't an end of the matter,' said I, 'for I shall be at Northallerton as soon as you are.'

"'Will you? By goles! then you'll have to fly there, and I don't see no prowision for wings about your shoulders, let alone your head or your heels.'

"'Never mind,' I exclaimed, 'I shall be there as soon as you are.'

"'I shall look out for you,' he replied; 'meanwhile excoose me, for my dinner is waiting.'

"So away he went, and away went I as fast as my legs would carry me. 'Tis true they didn't carry me very fast, for I was now weary and stiff and footsore; however, to keep myself from freezing I kept moving. The cursed ridges left by the coach wheels seemed to be frozen sharp as razors, and every step I took cut my unfortunate feet.

"Night had fallen, and it was quite dark. I had reached the bottom of a somewhat steep hill. I

don't think I could have walked a hundred paces further to save my existence; indeed, at that moment my feet gave way beneath me and I came a cropper.

"I soon pulled myself together, however, lighted my pipe, and waited for the coach.

"If only half an hour passed in waiting, it was surely the longest half hour I ever endured in my life.

"There I sat and shivered, my teeth chattered, and oh! that bitter, brutal wind which searched me out and cut into every inch of my body!

"At last I heard the guard's horn, and in a few minutes the horses slackened speed at the foot of the hill, which they now began leisurely to ascend.

"It was so dark I could only distinguish the coach by the sound of the wheels upon the frozen ground. Slowly as it moved, it was with difficulty I could keep pace with it, even by hanging on to the springs behind. For half a mile or more I continued to hang on like a badger to a bull-dog; but oh! the agony of that half mile, with my wretched feet giving way at every step! I shall never forget it, not if my life were to stretch out to the crack of doom. At last we reached the summit of the hill and came to a dead stand-still in silence, which was only broken by the driver growling —

"'Now then, Jim! jump down, and let us have the skid on, or we shall break our necks going down the Hog's Back.'

"I might have known that beastly hill was the Hog's Back, for I had been walking on his bristles all the way.

"'Aye, aye,' grumbled the guard, 'curse the wind. I wish the darned snow would only come down! It's better to be snowed up at once than to have the innards friz out of a man every five minutes.'

"Now, or never, was the time, now, while the coach stood still.

"Fortunately for me it was dark as pitch, so, while the guard fumbled about for the skid, I ascertained the exact geography of the springs, and, nerving myself for a desperate effort, swung myself up, and slipped my frozen body across them. My right arm hung down and made me secure on the one side, and my legs hung over securing me in a similar manner on the other. Perilous and uncomfortable as the position was, for a short time it seemed perfect elysium compared with the agony from which I had just escaped.

"At first I had some difficulty in holding on, in consequence of the jumbling and jolting of the coach as it went down the Hog's Back; but when

we got on level ground, and the skid was removed, the motion was much easier.

"The wind now began to change, and veered towards the south. There was just a slight sprinkling of something, which I took to be snow, but it might have been rain for all I know. In point of fact, I could not tell which it was in the darkness. By this time my body was benumbed, my right arm was fixed and motionless, the sinews of my legs were rigid, and my feet were frozen into blocks of ice. Amidst all this I became stupidly drowsy. I kept continually falling asleep and dreaming—dreaming of mother and of my old home down there at Devonport.

"It was Shrovetide, and she was tossing pancakes, and I was trying to grab one, but my brother always snapped them from me. I dreamt I was playing Hamlet at Covent Garden, it was my first appearance in London, and I had no tights, and was forced to black my legs with burnt cork as poor Anderton had done—that I was hissed off the stage. Then I was dreaming of *her* and the bairns at Sheffield, dreaming that I had got to Carlisle, and that Alick had given me the sack; that I had got to the North Pole, and was frozen alive inside an iceberg. In fact, all kinds of absurd and incongruous images kept flowing through my mind.

In no case could I have slept for five minutes at a time, and yet my dreams ranged over all time and space.

"At last I was toiling up the side of Vesuvius, I had reached the summit of the crater, I was about to leap head-foremost into the glowing lava to thaw my frozen limbs, when lo! down I came on my head!

"The coach had reached Northallerton. The horses had come to a sudden halt, and the shock had shook me from my perch.

"Fortunately no one saw my ignominious downfall, so I picked myself up as well as I could, and staggered across the yard towards the inn.

"As I did so I encountered the guard face to face. He glared upon me with open-mouthed and undisguised astonishment as he blurted out—'Well I'm d—d!'

"'Not yet,' I replied; 'I told you I'd be here as soon as you.'

"'But how the d—l did you get here?'

"'I'm a conjurer. At a pinch I can always ride on a broomstick; but I prefer the coach, it's more convenient in this weather. However, needs must when the d—l drives, or rather his guard, so for this time I've had to make shift with the broom.'

"As I made my way into the inn, the fellow

looked after me, as if he expected me to disappear in a flash of sulphur, whereas in point of fact I only disappeared into the kitchen, allured thither by the sight of a roaring fire and the smell of a huge sirloin of beef, which was revolving on the spit, propelled by a poor old bandy-legged brute of a dog, who licked my hand as soon as I came near him.

"The cook, a fine dark buxom woman of about thirty, and her helpmate, a red-headed young wench, who had a squint and a cocked nose, were bustling about preparing for supper.

"I was too far gone to think of eating, in fact I had only one thought, to rest myself; so I accosted the cook, and asked leave to sit down before the fire.

"'For sure, lad, for sure,' said she, 'sit thee down and warm thysen, and happen you may like a mug o' spiced yale and a sop i' the pan by-and-bye.'

"'You're very good,' I said, and down I sat before the fiery furnace, for such the kitchen hearth appeared to me.

"At first it scorched my face: by-and-bye my limbs became hot, hot as bars of red-hot iron; then my feet began to swell. To give them ease, I got my boots off, with difficulty, and stretched my poor swollen legs towards the fire.

"A dark purple stream began to ooze forth from

both feet, till the white hearthstone was stained with blood, my head turned round, an indescribable sense of relief, and warmth, and comfort came over me. It seemed as if mother had my head in her arms, and my poor wench had my feet in her lap, the bairns were playing round my knees, and—I remembered nothing more.

* * * * * *

"When I awoke, I was lying in an ample comfortable bed in an old-fashioned room with oaken furniture.

"Exactly opposite was a low mullioned embayed window, through which streamed the sunshine of a bright winter's morning.

"On one side of the bed was a great strapping fellow, with red hair, red whiskers, red cheeks, I had almost said red eyes; but that was fancy, for I found afterwards they were of a soft tender brown. It was the sun which caught them, and they seemed to flame up like live coals.

"'Where am I?' I inquired, 'and who are you?'

"'Dashed if I didn't say so,' roared the man. 'Here, muther! Sally! Come up, wench! Stretch thy legs, and look alive about it! Lunnon chap's turned corner, I tow'd ye he were worth a dozen dead men! Come up an' have a look at 'un!'

"He had scarcely finished speaking when a comely, motherly woman of about forty, accompanied by a bright, fair-haired, bonnie lassie of perhaps about eighteen, came in.

"They were evidently mother and daughter.

"'Eh! Jimmy,' said the mistress, for so she was, 'dunno skear t' lad, just gi'e un time to shake hissen up a bit. Are you betther, sir?' she inquired.

"'Have I been ill?' I asked.

"'Oh! main bad, since Monday neet.'

"'And what day is it now?' I asked.

"'Thursday,' replied the girl.

"'Thursday!' I echoed, 'and I'm due at Carlisle to-morrow night. Where am I now, m'm, please?'

"'Here, sir, at "Swan wi', Two Necks," Northallerton. But thear, it's ill talking on an empty stomach. Doctor said when you come to, you were to talk as little as possible, and eat as much as you could, and as often as you could; so come along, wench, an' let's see if we canna get some'at tempting to break his fast,' and away she trotted with her daughter.

"'I'll tell 'ee what it is, my lad,' said the man; 'the missus, she ha' been pouring beef-tea into thee by t' gallon, ever since thou wast knocked over. Thou'st been off thy chump a bit, but that's all reet now. How's thy poor feet?'

"'My feet?' I said. 'Stop a bit,' and I sat up in bed, pulled the clothes down, and saw both feet and ankles carefully bandaged. Then it all came back to me, the coach, the kitchen fire, and the rest of it.

"My worthy host, Mr. Jimmy Dawson—for it appeared that was his name—told me that when I tumbled down senseless, the cook and her helpmate screamed blue murder and alarmed the house.

"One of the first to help me was the gruff guard, who growled, 'So this is the end of his conjuring, poor d—l!' and then he up and told them all he knew.

"The family doctor, who was smoking his pipe in the bar, came and took stock of me, had me carried upstairs, improvised a rough and ready hot bath, and bandaged my feet. The missus had the bed warmed, and got a quart of hot posset inside me.

"The doctor, however, hadn't done with me, for he almost smothered me from throat to abdomen with a great mustard poultice; there was no mistake about that, for I was nearly skinned by the operation. Then they tucked me up and left me to my slumbers, and I suppose I must have continued unconscious for the rest of the time.

"By the time he had finished this explanation, in

came 'the missus' and the fair Sally, accompanied by cook and her ruddy assistant, with the breakfast; you see I'd quite a feminine audience.

"'Eh! young man,' said the cook, 'I'm main glad to see thee looking so lively. When thee dropped down so quiet in kitchen yonder, I welly jumped out o' my skin. For sure, I thought thee dead as a red herring.'

"'That'll do, lasses—that'll do; clear out, for sure he'll eat none while you're glamocking at un,' said the mistress.

"So away they went, and left me to my breakfast, which I did ample justice to. I think I ate enough for half a dozen.

Thank God! except the excoriation of the mustard plaster, I escaped with only a few stiff bones and a pair of game ankles.

"By-and-bye the doctor came (how good they always are to the poor and needy, especially to those of our craft!) When I told him who I was, and how essential it was for me to get to Carlisle by the following night, he looked very glum as he said —

"'Well, my lad, if you go you take your life in your hand. As for walking, that's out of the question; but we'll see what can be done to get you over the ground. Do you feel strong enough to get up?'

"'Now, this very minute,' I replied.

"'Well, you are a plucked 'un, anyhow,' he continued; 'I'll go and talk to Jimmy Dawson and 'the missus,' and hear what they say about it.'

"'Where are my clothes?' I said.

"'Ah, I must speak to Dawson about those too,' he replied, as he left me in a fever of anxiety.

"In about half an hour Mr. Dawson returned with a pile of clothing, a suit of tweed, a scarlet woollen singlet and drawers, a pair of lambs' wool socks, a clean shirt, with a great cambric frill, and a pair of slippers like canoes.

"'Doctor's been telling us thou'rt bound to get to Carlisle to-morrow neet, lad,' said he.

"'Yes, I must get there if I'm alive. They won't be able to open the theatre without me. But where are my clothes?'

"'In one of my bean fields. They were torn to pieces, lad; and what was left on 'em smothered wi' muck, so I set un up for a scare-crow. Howsumdever, exchange be no robbery, so thou must fettle thysen up in these togs as well as thou can'st. They wunna pinch thee; for sure, there's room enow for two weeny chaps like thee,' and so he rattled on, not suffering me to get in a word edgeways until I was dressed.

"The clothes were warm and comfortable; but,

as he had said, there was room enough and to spare.

"As I ruefully contemplated myself in the glass, I arrived at the conclusion that if the scare-crow in the bean field was a bigger scare-crow than I was, he must be a portentous scare-crow indeed!

"When I got downstairs the doctor and the ladies laughed heartily, and, indeed, I laughed myself at my get up.

"But it's getting late, John; and I must come to the end of my yarn. If I were to attempt to describe the kindness of those good people, even during the remaining few hours of my stay in their house, we shouldn't get to bed till the middle of next week!

"My friend, the Bardolphian guard, had passed through Northallerton on his way back to Sheffield, and would be due for his next journey the next day. Sure enough he turned up, rough and rubicund as ever.

"At supper time he came up and planted himself behind me.

"'Well, young shaver,' said he, 'how's the trade in broomsticks getting on? Hast found un yet big enow to get to Carlisle on?'

"This was rather a gruesome pleasantry, and I was not in the mood for it, so I shut up and made no answer.

"After supper I found him having a jaw with my host and hostess and the doctor. Then he came over to me, and giving me a slap on the back, which shook me from stem to stern, said —

"'Cheer up, lad; and don't look so down i' the mouth; them as plays at bowls must look out to get a rubber now and then. 'Twas thee that started chaff, but chaff be danged now. Thou'rt going wi' me to Carlisle to-neet, and what's more we haven't got a single inside, so thou shalt ha' whole o' inside to thysen. Not in those shoes though, nor that coat, danged if thee does. Here, Jimmy! a word, owd chap,' he said to the landlord, and they went out together.

"By-and-bye 'the missus' came back with a great coat, a hairy cap, and a pair of Wellington boots, not much the worse for wear, and although a size or so too large, sufficiently warm and comfortable.

"My heart was too full for words, and I couldn't help snivelling while they almost carried me into the coach.

"When they got me to the door the doctor wrung my hand, and said —

"'Good-bye, and good luck.'

"My host hugged me, Mrs. Dawson kissed me, the gentle Sally coyly followed suit; and at the last

moment the cook and the girl with red hair made a rush at me. I bade God bless those honest people that night, and I hope He has blessed them always.

"I never saw them before, and I have never seen them since.

"I wrote them from Carlisle, and just got a line or two in answer from the fair Sally.

"Some years later my wife sent them a little present to remind them of my existence, and of her gratitude for their great kindness; but no answer ever reached us.

"The guard turned up trumps. At every stage he came to see how I was getting on, made me have a pull at his pocket pistol, and kept me supplied with sandwiches.

"At eight o'clock that night we landed at the Theatre Royal, Carlisle, where I encountered for the first time the redoubtable 'Alick.'*

"The beautiful Mrs. Nisbett was 'starring' it in Lady Teazle; it was the High Sheriff's bespeak, and the house was crowded.

"The second act of the play was over when I presented myself.

* John Henry Alexander, proprietor of the Theatre Royal, Glasgow, one of the most famous and eccentric managers of his time. He died literally in harness, bequeathing a large fortune to his wife and son, every shilling of which was lost six months after his death by the failure of a great local bank.

"'So, sir,' growled the manager, 'this is a pretty time to turn up; I was going to double "Charles" myself with Crabtree, but you'd better go and get your traps on. I suppose you've played the part often enough.'

"'Oh! scores of times!' I replied. (Heaven forgive me for lying! I'd never played "Charles" in my life!)

"'Well, away you go, and get dressed, and look alive about it.'

"'Have my things arrived, sir?' I inquired.

"'How the d—l should I know, sir? It's not my place to look after your things.'

"Away I went and inquired, high, low, here, there, everywhere for my 'props.' Alas! they had *not* arrived!

"Upon telling 'Alick' how I was situated he roared—

"'D—n your props! Go on as you are, sir!'

"Easy enough for Mr. 'Alick' to say, but deuced difficult for me to do. However, one good Samaritan lent me a white choker, another a pair of ruffles, another a pair of pumps; but for the rest I walked on attired in Mr. Dawson's suit of homespuns, nearly twice too big for me.

"Fortunately at the beginning of my first scene the table at which I sat obscured the eccentricities of

my attire from the audience. 'Alick' sat at the symposium with the other guests. Just before the scene drew off he inquired —

"'Can you sing the song?'

"'Yes,' said I, bold as brass, 'if the leader will only give me a chord in G!'

"When I came down the stage amongst the other fellows, all bright and smart in their court suits, and silk stockings, and powdered wigs, you may imagine what a guy I looked in the homely and Brobdignagian attire of the burly Mr. Dawson.

"Well, sir, I was greeted with a Gargantuan yell, loud enough to take the roof off the little theatre. For a moment I actually dreamed they had taken the roof off my head; certainly, for some seconds I didn't know whether I stood on it or on my heels, nor have I any idea how I ever got to the end of the play; in point of fact, I never did get to the end of it, for La Belle Nisbett graciously came to the rescue, spoke the tag, and so saved me a predestinate pelting.

"No, dear boy, I did not distinguish myself in your crack part.

"That was my first and last appearance in Charles Surface!

"The next time we did the piece I was relegated to Snake, but I never was happy in the comedy

until, after having failed in every other part in the piece, I alighted on my feet at last in Sir Peter, a performance they seem to have relished to-night.

"And now, sir, as it is time for all decent people to be at roost. 'To bed! to bed!'"

CHAPTER V.

ECCENTRIC MANAGERS.

Preston Fifty Years Ago: Watkins Burroughs—Dress Circle in Mourning—A Bumper Benefit: Buridan in "The Tower of Nesle"—Across St. George's Channel: Belfast—Harry Johnstone, the Scotch Roscius—A Domestic Calamity—Premature Termination of the Season—Aberdeen: Corbet Ryder—Bonnie Inverness, a Golden Time: "Youth at the Prow and Pleasure at the Helm"—The Great Duke and his Fair Daughters: Romeo and Juliet—A Fancy Ball—Homeward Bound: Deoch au Dorach!—The Mystery of the Sealed Packet.

One day, after dinner, at Camden Road, I happened to mention that I had just been acting in the North, at Inverness, Aberdeen, Dundee, Glasgow, and Edinburgh, and had broken the journey to town at York and Preston.

"Preston," said Phelps, "proud Preston! The bonniest town in Lancashire. My eldest daughter lives there; another of my bairns was born there when I was acting with Watkins Burroughs."

"Was that the Watkins Burroughs who was the original Jerry in 'Tom and Jerry' at the Adelphi, and Geordie Robertson in Dibdin's version of the 'Heart of Midlothian' at the Surrey?" I enquired.

"The same; and a very eccentric and remarkable man he was. His origin was enveloped in mystery, no one ever really knew whence he came; but a rumour obtained very general belief that he was 'the natural son of an unnatural father,' who, in his time, had been Prime Minister.

"Whatever his father may have been, he was a gentleman. As a manager, he was always liberal and enterprising; and as an actor, he was most versatile and accomplished.

"I wonder he never made his mark in town. Goodness knows, plenty of fellows, without one tithe of his ability, have done so. His versatility was simply marvellous. He was certainly the best 'Julian St. Pierre' in 'The Wife,' and the best 'Crack' in 'The Turnpike Gate' I have ever seen. His wife, too, was a woman of great beauty and accomplishments, and wherever we went she was the 'great pan of the dairy.'

"Of late years I always hear very bad accounts of Preston as a theatrical town. In my youth it was different, that is to say, as far as the popular parts of the house were concerned, for they were crowded

nightly, although we were there in the summer. The boxes, however, were well-ventilated, and we frequently acted without a human being in them.

"This was very mortifying to Burroughs. It wasn't so much the loss of money that hurt him, for he was then in affluent circumstances, and could stand the racket, but his pride was wounded.

"He got an idea into his head that the upper ten of the place regarded both himself and his company as mere strollers of the lower order; while, in point of fact, both his wife and himself were distinguished artists, and he was as good a gentleman as any in the County Palatine.

"After we had played for nearly a month to empty boxes, one morning he called the carpenter and the property-man into the box-lobby, and gave them orders to nail up the box doors and to festoon them with crape. Then he had a mortuary inscription painted over the entrance to this effect:—

> Gone into Mourning
>
> For Brains, Good Taste and Appreciation,
>
> Defunct
>
> Amongst the Upper Ten of Preston.

"Next he went to the box-office and withdrew

the plan; then he announced in the day bills that 'the boxes would be closed until further notice!'

"This eccentric procedure created quite a sensation in the town, and made him the idol of the pit and gallery folk, who crowded the theatre more than ever.

"He had a very stylish turn-out, which his groom brought down to the theatre every morning, and when the rehearsal was over, he used to drive through all the central thoroughfares with his wife; and being, as I have said, very distinguished-looking people, they attracted more attention than all the aristocracy of Preston.

"When the 'upper ten' found themselves banished from the theatre, they discovered all at once that they wanted to go; but it was in vain that they applied at the box-office or the theatre—they were merely referred to the mortuary inscription.

"Being independent of their caprice, Burroughs could afford to gratify his own; and, personally, he was not a man to take a liberty with.

"At last, as we got towards the end of the season, the play of 'The Wonder' was announced for Mrs. Burroughs' benefit.

"In the course of three or four days he was inundated with letters requesting seats for the boxes.

"Though strong-headed and wrong-headed, he yielded at length to his wife's persuasion, and consented to open the box office.

"He had his own way, however, of doing so, for he announced that, 'In compliance with the request of Mrs. Burroughs, the quarantine had been removed, and the boxes would be opened; but that the prices would be increased.'

"The first day of this advertisement every place was taken at the raised rate, and when the benefit took place the theatre was crowded long before the time of commencement.

"The play was received with great enthusiasm, and at the end Burroughs came forward and addressed the audience to this effect —

"'My excellent, good friends—and when I use that much-abused word I beg that it may be understood I do not include in that category the strangers in the boxes, who have come to-night for the first time during an unusually protracted campaign. It is to you in the pit and gallery, who have gladdened our hearts with your presence nightly; to you, to whose good offices we have been, and are, indebted for a very pleasant and a very prosperous season; to you I say, on behalf of my wife and myself, and on behalf of every member of the company, from the lowest to the

highest, for your ever-present sympathy and appreciation,

> 'I can no other answer make,
> But thanks, and thanks, and ever thanks.'

"With that he retired, amidst such an outburst of cheering as I have rarely or ever heard.

"The box people took their wigging gently, and bore no malice; indeed, until the end of the season they came nightly in shoals.

"For my benefit, I played Buridan in the 'Tower of Nesle,' a most powerful play, which has never yet been put into decent English."

"I've tried my hand upon it," I interjected, "and Charles Reade over and over again promised to tackle it for me; but we could never get over one difficulty, that awful incident in the second act."

"Awful, I admit; but how many 'awful' things are in our own drama which time and precedent sanctify? For my part, I don't believe in Mr. Bowdler. The Greeks were wise in their generation, and they didn't banish the great passions, vices, and crimes from their stage, and the Elizabethans were equally virile. Our mission is 'to hold the mirror up to nature,' and nature refuses to be Bowdlerized. What is it Sheridan Knowles says?

> 'Nature is nature still, and thought to swerve
> Is at the bottom true.'

"We did 'King and no King' and the 'Duchess of Malfy,' with all their attendant horrors, at Sadlers Wells; and our people, who didn't believe that 'life was all beer and skittles,' 'supped full with horrors' and liked 'em.

"But to return to my benefit. I had not sold five shillings' worth of tickets. (It was in the merry month of July, and the nights were light up to nine o'clock.) When we left the house, I was dreadfully down on my luck.

"Just as it struck six we approached the theatre, and lo! we found the street so crowded as to be impassable; in fact, we had to fight our way through the crowd to get in at the stage door.

"The receipts amounted to seventy-six pounds!

"Burroughs, who was a prince in money matters, gave me all that came in after the first twenty pounds.

"That was my first successful benefit.

"That night I went home the proud and happy possessor of fifty-six pounds. I had never had so much money in my life before.

"From Preston we went to Belfast.

"What was I acting then?

"Oh! all sorts of things—anything and everything I could get hold of. Of course Burroughs had the pick, but I had all the best plums in the

pudding after him. When he played Julian St. Pierre, I played Ferrado Gonzago; but when I played Virginius he played Icilius, when he played Hamlet I played the Ghost, when I played Richard he played Richmond, when he played Jaffier I played Pierre, when he played Romeo I played Mercutio, and played the devil with him—(not Burroughs, for he was a capital Romeo!) but with Mercutio.

"After a fairly successful season we went to Dundee, and then I took a new departure. We got up 'Rob Roy,' in which Burroughs played Rob, and I had the cheek to attempt the Bailie, acquitting myself, so the Dundee folk said, pretty fairly for a Southron.

"During the season Harry Johnstone, the Scotch Roscius, as he was called, came to play a round of his characters, though falling into the sere and *yallow*—

"None of your lip, sir! I prefer *yallow*; it's more musical. Besides, great actors have at all times laid down the laws of pronunciation, and I lay down my own laws!

"Where was I? Oh! it was about old Harry.

"Well, he was still the remains of a magnificent man, and a splendid actor.

"He played all the parts from Hamlet to Rugantino, the latter a most admirable performance. He

actually played young Norval, and though a man of seventy, he positively looked merely a stalwart youth of five-and-twenty. For his benefit he played Sir Pertinax Mac Sycophant, and it was upon that extraordinary performance I based my Sir Pertinax, which was sufficiently Scotch to ultimately induce the Scotch themselves to take me for a veritable Sandie.

"Our season in Dundee was rendered memorable by two remarkable incidents.

"The first was the production of 'The Wife,' which we got up with new scenery and appointments, and which was positively acted on the first night to a house of £1 12s. 6d.! Furious at this want of taste, with his accustomed eccentricity, Burroughs rushed into print, and the next playbill contained the following remarkable announcement:—

"'Notice! Whereas the play of "The Wife, a tale of Mantua," by James Sheridan Knowles, author of "Virginius," "The Hunchback," "William Tell," &c., although supported by the entire strength of the company, and produced with entirely new scenery, costumes, and appointments, was acted on Monday last to a receipt of £1 12s. 6d., the play is withdrawn until further notice. When the public of Dundee have learned to appreciate this great

work, by the greatest of living dramatists, it will be repeated—but not till then.'

"This eccentric *affiche* had the effect of attracting universal attention, and letters came flowing in, requesting that the play might be repeated, and the result was that we ultimately played it six or eight times to overflowing houses.

"The season was most prosperous.

"At the height of its prosperity an event occurred which brought it to an abrupt and calamitous termination.

"Of course there was a woman in the case; there always is when there's trouble afloat.

"It is only your real men who suffer from these knock-down blows; your whelp or your scoundrel laughs at them.

"'All right, my lady,' says the airy ruffian, 'the world's wide enough for you and me, and if it isn't, Hades is big enough for both, so you go your way down the primrose path, and I'll go mine, and 'hands over to the next,' till you get to the gutter, when the parish will be bound to bury you. Meanwhile I can find consolation in the bottle, or the brothel, or both!'

"It would do no good to any one now to dig up this dead and buried scandal, so let it rest and rot

'On Lethe's gloomy wharf—'

'Tis past, 'tis profitless to memory, and better far forgotten.'

"Suffice it that Burroughs passed through a fiery ordeal, passed through it with unblemished honour.

"From that time, however, commenced his downfall.

"His pride was invulnerable, and whatever may have been his sufferings, he endured in silence, and made no sign.

"The next time I heard of him, he had 'fallen from his high estate,' and was stage-manager to Anderson, the conjurer, at Manchester.

"Years after the poor fellow called on me at Sadlers Wells a broken man.

"When we parted, he said quietly, and without effusion —

"'Since Dundee, I have never been the same man—that blow left me shattered and desolate, and from that moment it has always been down, down, down, till I can get no lower.'

"I have never seen him since; but I have heard that he sank into becoming the box-keeper of the Dublin Theatre, where he had once been manager; but that was years ago, so I suppose his troubles are all over now—let us hope so.

"In consequence of this deplorable occurrence, I was again thrown on my beam-ends.

"When, however, things get to the worst, they must end or mend, and, as luck would have it, I got

a short engagement with the eccentric Corbett Ryder, the original Rob Roy, to act leading business, for the end of the season at Aberdeen, and to go from thence to Inverness.

"This was my first engagement for leading business, and we were jubilant accordingly.

"There was no theatre at Inverness, and we acted at the Assembly Rooms, which were the only public rooms in the place.

"It was the height of the fashionable season.

"Every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday were devoted to balls or soirées, hence we were restricted to three performances a week, on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays; and as our 'fit-up' had to be erected in the morning and taken down at night, in order to clear the decks for the dancers, every man-jack of us had to give a hand. As leading actor I had to lead the way and set a good example to the rest. The post of honour is always the post of danger. I used to swarm up the poles like a monkey, and at last rather prided myself on my agility and my proficiency in the art of pole-climbing and 'fitting-up.'

"The Theatre Royal, for by this title we dignified our little show, was crowded nightly by the *élite* of the place.

"Nearly all the room was filled at the reserved

price of five shillings (a shilling was the lowest), and whether it arose from the fact that our audience were close to us, around us, and about us, and almost, I may say, atop of us, and hence, that I had increased facilities for observation, I don't know, but certainly I don't remember to have ever seen so many beautiful women and so many stalwart men assembled together night after night before or since.

"You see it was before the railways, and the northern nobility used to make this charming little town their winter capital.

"We were paid fairly liberal salaries; but in consequence of the shortness of the season, and other circumstances, we were debarred from our benefits, which was a great disappointment, to me more particularly, as I had no benefit in Dundee on account of the abrupt termination of the season there.

"Apart from this we had a delightful time of it.

"In the theatre we acted nothing but the great works of the great masters; there I played for the first time Hamlet and other leading parts in our classical drama, and our audiences were as enthusiastic as they were appreciative.

"Out of the theatre we made many friends.

"There were riding excursions, and even some boating trips before the winter closed in, and

dinners, suppers, songs, recitations, and whiskey, more I fear than was good for us.

"On one occasion I was asked to dine with the great Duke and his buxom red-haired daughters *en famille.*

"I thought at first that these beautiful young ladies were disposed to 'sit' on me, for they asked me to spout after dinner, but I said 'I had left my cap and bells at home.' The Duke laughed, and then I thought he was a gentleman and I was a snob, for had I not been glad enow to spout and sing at the 'King's Arms' in Sheffield not so very long before? So feeling heartily ashamed of myself I sang 'The Macgregors' Gathering.' Then one of the ladies offered to play Juliet, and challenged me to do the balcony scene.

"I was always a 'blistering' Romeo, but I couldn't refuse so fair a challenge; so we improvised a balcony with some chairs and tables, and plants from the conservatory, and I played the part better that time than I ever played it in my life.

"Altogether a delightful evening, and one to be remembered.

"After this I had an invitation to the fancy ball for my wife and myself. I didn't want to go, but she did.

"There was a difficulty about the dress, but her

ingenuity surmounted that, and she ruffled it as bravely as the best of them in white muslin and cherry-coloured ribbons; and though I say it, I think she looked as well as any woman in the room. I disguised myself in my Iago dress, with a long white cashmere cloak, and I didn't look amiss for me—I was never an Adonis, you know.

"I certainly had one advantage over most of the other fellows—I knew how to put my 'traps' on, and they fitted me, which theirs didn't, for many of them had been obliged to lay Ryder's wardrobe under contribution, and precious guys they looked.

"At first we were nervous and anxious, but every one was so kind and friendly that we were soon at our ease.

"The Duke led my darling out for a quadrille, and my Juliet challenged me to a waltz, but I told her I wasn't up to that, though I could get through the Lancers, for which she did me the honour to be my partner.

"Then the Duke took my wife in to supper, and I escorted my fair Juliet.

"At last came the end of all these pleasant times; the season was over, and we had to turn southward just as the swallows were returning towards the north.

"The bairns were in Preston, and we must needs make our way back there.

"The day before our departure had been devoted to farewell calls, packing, &c.

"At night there was a jovial gathering at the "Athol Arms."

"We bade our friends 'good-night,' and 'good-bye,' but three or four of them said they would come down and see us off on the morrow.

"The coach left at twelve, but we were at the office at half-past eleven. When our fares were paid we had little left, save heavy hearts and empty pockets.

"As we were the only members of the company who were going south, all the boys and girls came to see us off.

"Also there came Mr. Macdonald, the Duke's factor, Mr. Ballantyne, Mr. Carruthers, of the *Inverness Courier*, and a gentleman whose name I have forgotten, who had been an intimate friend of Sir Walter Scott. While the girls looked after my wife and coddled her up, the men insisted on my having a 'Deoch an dorach,' and yet another.

"At last it was time to start, and having shook hands all round, I jumped aloft.

"The guard blew his horn, and the coachman gathered up his reins.

"At the last moment Mr Macdonald sprang up beside me. 'Mr Phelps,' said he, 'a few of your

friends have requested me to give you this letter. It is of importance, but you will observe it is not to be opened till you reach Aberdeen.'

"Before I could speak the coach was off, and amidst cheers, waving of hats and handkerchiefs, I caught the last glimpse of my kind friends and of Inverness.

"Lost vision of my youth. I can see you now, can see all your honest, manly faces, hear your cheerful voices.

"We had barely left the beautiful little town behind us when my wife whispered —

"'Sam, do open the letter—I am so anxious.'

"'So am I,' I replied, 'but don't waste your breath, honey—I shan't open it till we get to Aberdeen.'

"I kept my word; but as soon as we entered the granite city, I eagerly tore open the envelope. It contained a sheet of note-paper, in which was a small sealed envelope.

"On the paper was written —

"'From a few Inverness friends and admirers of Mr. Phelps, with best wishes for his rise and his progress in his profession.'

"In a fever of excitement I tore open the smaller envelope. It contained a bank bill for £50, payable at sight!

CHAPTER VI.

IN PORT AT LAST.

Up and Down Snaefell—Phelps Returns to Town—Hard Times: The London Theatres Closed Against Him—An Old Friend—Exeter and Plymouth—The Turning in the Long Lane—Delights of Popularity—Return to London—La Belle Nisbett and Ben Webster—The Fotheringay—Plymouth, Devonport, Totness, Brixham, and Torquay—Engagement for the Haymarket: Macready—Sir Edward Mortimer—Engagement for Covent Garden—*Début* in Town: Haymarket and Covent Garden.

On our way from Douglas to Ramsey, a few years ago—during our summer holiday in the Isle of Man—Phelps, his daughters, Mrs. Coleman, and myself, had halted at the foot of Snaefell to have a look at this small "monarch of mountains."

The young ladies expressed a wish to climb the peak, to get a glimpse of the unrivalled view of the three kingdoms, which is to be obtained from that "coign of vantage," so arranging with the Herr papa and Madame to drive leisurely round and

await our arrival in the Fairy Glen at the opposite base of the mountain, we began to scale the summit. By the time we reached it the poor girls were dead beat.

Had I known the distance we had to traverse I would never have permitted them to try the experiment; but from the high road the very top of the hill seemed only a couple of furlongs distant, whereas we found, to our cost, it proved to be a couple of miles or more.

The day was heavenly, and the view was magnificent; but on referring to my watch I found, to my horror, that it was within half an hour of the time when we were due in the glen below, so, after a rest of barely five minutes, we commenced the descent. Of course we got down much more quickly than we got up, but, as ill luck would have it, in trying to leap a small rivulet, which barred our way, the younger lady sprained her ankle, and I had to support or carry her as best I could down the declivity.

Needless to say, this operation materially retarded our progress, and we were fully two hours behind time when we got to the spot fixed for our rendezvous. To our consternation there was no sign of the carriage or its occupants.

By this time I was myself pretty well blown;

but there was no help for it; I had to leave the ladies in the glen, and begin the toilsome ascent of the high road leading to the place where we had parted company hours before. After another breather of a mile or more, I encountered Phelps and my wife.

He had misunderstood the appointment, and blamed every one but himself for the misunderstanding.

His natural amiability (and when scratched the wrong way, he was one of the most irascible and irritating men I have ever met!) was enhanced by the fact that he was not only parched with thirst and famished with hunger, but that, unfortunately, I had taken his cigar case with me, so that he was even debarred the solace of the nicotian weed.

However, I remembered the adage that "a still tongue makes a wise head," so I kept my tongue between my teeth.

Fortunately we had brought a substantially filled hamper with us, and by the time he had stowed a hearty dinner and a bottle of good wine beneath his belt, smoked a cigar, and taken his forty winks, "Richard was himself again."

It was now my turn to be rather querulous, for I was weary, footsore, and altogether out of sorts, and this set me off at a tangent to complain of not

having achieved certain ambitious projects I had in view.

"Stuff and nonsense! Rubbish!" growled the old lion. "You emerged from the ruck with your name in big letters almost at the age, at which I actually came upon the stage.

"For thirteen weary years after that I toiled and struggled and slaved, all the time consumed by an ambition as devouring and engrossing as your own, all the while studying night and day and trying to improve myself.

"Do what I might, I could scarcely make both ends meet, and after all these years of drudgery the goal of my hopes seemed further off than ever.

"It was in vain that I wrote to the London managers; they didn't even answer my letters.

"At last, tired of roaming from pillar to post, we decided to make the best of our way to town and try our luck there.

"Accordingly, in the year 1835, we returned to London worse off than when we left it, for now there were the bairns to be looked after.

"On my arrival in town I went from stage-door to stage-door, seeking interviews which were never granted.

"All the important theatres were hermetically closed to the poor country actor, so I tried the

minors, from the highest to the lowest, always with the same result.

"Thus day after day passed away until the days spread into weeks, the weeks into months.

"Up to this time I had stood upon my dignity and had only applied to be engaged for leading business; now I resolved to take anything I could get.

"I went to the Surrey, the Victoria, the Pavilion, seeking an engagement for the juveniles, the eccentrics, or the heavies. No go! I went to the Dust-hole* and offered myself for walking gentlemen and singing business. No go!

"I went to the Garrick and offered to play in some dog pieces, but I wasn't even good enough for the dogs. Then I went to that wretched little hole, the old Standard, to try for second old men; but the proprietor, a little man named Grundy, assured me that I was too slim and genteel for that line of business.

"I went to Astley's, where they were doing the 'Battle of Waterloo,' but found no opening there; in fact the stage manager informed me with dignity, they never engaged 'hany one at Hastley's hexcept Metropolitan performers.'

* The Queen's, Tottenham Court Road; afterwards, Prince of Wales'.

"I saw they were getting up Mazeppa, so in my despair I slipped up into the painting-room and offered to give a hand there.

"The painter, a great long unwashed fellow, with black corkscrew ringlets, and a flying Dutchman hat, told me they wanted 'hartists not hamatoors.'

"I wanted to go to Bow Street, but finding myself without a penny to cross Waterloo Bridge with, I walked round to Charing Cross, down the Strand, up Wellington Street, and by sheer force of habit struck out for Drury Lane.

"Instinctively I turned into the Harp, when whom should I stumble across but Hay, whom you will doubtless remember from his having recommended me to my engagement at Gainsborough. He was now a heavy swell, and had just become, by a lucky fluke, manager of the Plymouth Theatre.

"I must tell you that when I got to Abbotts' we had corresponded for some time, and I had frequently reminded him of my existence by sending him a newspaper with a play-bill inside it.

"As soon as he caught sight of me he exclaimed —

"'Eureka! By Jove! you're the very chap I want. Are you in an engagement?'

"'No, I wish to God I was,' I replied.

"'Don't take the Lord's name in vain, young man. I'm going to open at Exeter on Monday next, and I can give you a berth.'

"'For leading business?' I inquired, anxiously.

"'Of course, for what else did you think? Here, come round the corner, let's peck a bit, and we can make the requisite arrangements.'

"He was a brick, was Hay, and before we parted he had sprung a ten-pound note.

"When I got home I was ten years younger than when I went out that morning, and wasn't there a banquet that night!

"Next day we were off to Exeter, bairns and all. It was strange that Hay should on each occasion have marked the turning point of my fortunes. From that moment I never looked back.

"I may say, without vanity, that upon my first appearance at Exeter I made a most favourable impression.

"I feel now as much as I felt then how much I was indebted to Hay's good offices. He put me up for all the great parts, and went from pillar to post proclaiming, that it was to the credit of the ancient city that the Exeter playgoers had appreciated the two greatest actors of the century, namely, Kean and myself.

"I took heart of grace and went to work with a will.

"I was up every morning at six in the summer and seven in the winter to perfect myself in the rudiments of my art.

"I had no time to lose now, for I was approaching my thirty-third year.

"My benefit was an enormous success, the greatest house, 'twas said, ever known in the theatre.

"At the end of the season I took advantage of a short vacation to run up to town to see what was doing.

"How different all appeared now to me. I was fashionably dressed, had a five-pound note in my pocket, was elate and confident, and it seemed as if I had taken a new lease of life.

"Covent Garden was open under Osbaldistone, and Ben Webster was stage-manager there; but it was currently reported that he was about to open the Haymarket in the autumn.

"Fortunately my good genius Mrs. Nisbett was in town."

Here I enquired, "Is there any truth in the rumour which has come down to us that she was intended for the Fotheringay?"

"I don't know. I suppose, however, there can be little doubt that her father, Captain Macnamara, was glanced at in Captain Costigan, and this gave colour to the other theory.

"The general impression was that Mr. Jeames de la Pluche admired the lady, that she did not reciprocate his admiration; hence the caricature of La Fotheringay.

I can't speak with any degree of certainty on the subject, but this belief was prevalent amongst the green-room gossip of the period.

"This much, however, is certain, when I knew her La Nisbett was a large-hearted, beautiful, lovable, and very accomplished woman.

"When I had acted with her during the Exeter season she was very much pleased, and promised to help me if ever a chance occurred.

"I waited upon her, she gave me a most gracious reception and a most excellent breakfast, and what was better still, an introduction to Webster, recommending me in such glowing terms that he promised me an engagement.

"Previous to this I had written to Macready, who, it was alleged, had taken Covent Garden for the ensuing season. But I got no answer to my application.

"At all events an engagement at the Haymarket was good enough, and I returned to Exeter triumphant. If anything, Hay and my wife were more jubilant about the matter than I was.

"In the darkest hour she had never doubted that I should get to the top of the tree.

"We now went on a series of flying visits to Plymouth, Devonport, and other places in the neighbourhood.

"In Plymouth I was very favourably received,

but in Devonport they didn't think much of me, thus realizing the adage that 'no man is a prophet in his own country.' From Devonport we went to Totness, Brixham, and Torquay,* where Webster fulfilled his promise by sending me my formal engagement for leading business at the Haymarket.

"We did wonderfully well during this little touring expedition, realizing considerably more than our winter salaries, and had a fine high old time of

* Talk about romance—here is one in a nutshell.

The following extract is from a letter written me by Mrs. Alfred Mellon's father, an old gentleman of 84 years of age, and received while the proofs of this work were passing through my hands :—

"Dec. 6th, 1885.

". . . I hope you have not 'cooled' on my reminiscences—they are quite ready for you to slip into.

"Mrs. Mellon still continues in a prostrate condition, which forbids all hope of ever resuming her professional labours.

"I see you are about to publish a Life of Phelps. I have had much to say about him in my work, for I cannot think any living being can know so much of his early career as myself, having acted with him in *a sail loft in Torquay* about half a century ago, and before his engagement at the Haymarket.

"I am very weakly, and I am certain *my bill is due !*

"Hoping your energies will continue with the activities of your mind,

Yours, dear C.,

"W. Woolgar."

A week after the receipt of this letter I called upon the old gentleman and had an hour or two's chat with him; he was very ailing and despondent.

A week later he was found dead in his chair !

We buried him to-day at Brompton. As yet his granddaughters have not dared to communicate the tidings to their mother.

Here indeed is a tragedy within a tragedy.

J. C.

Dec. 24th, 1885.

it in the garden of England with fresh air and exercise and sea bathing, eating of the fat and drinking of the sweet—living greatly on beans and bacon, eggs and butter, freshly gathered fruit, and an abundance of clouted cream.

"Most of these delightful places abutted on the sea, and I arose daily with the sun, polishing up my old parts, and studying new ones. Like Demosthenes I out-roared the winds and waves in my efforts to strengthen my voice.

"Finding myself rather awkward in my gait, at Plymouth I placed myself under a drill sergeant, who gave me pepper for an hour or two every day, and came over to Torquay to renew the operation.

"To this day I owe a debt of gratitude to that honest soldier, since it is through his tuition that I know how to stand and walk like a man and to move my limbs with grace and ease.

"From Torquay we went to Southampton for a few weeks. We had been there about a month when one night, after playing Sir Edward Mortimer in 'The Iron Chest,' to my astonishment I got a hasty note from Macready inviting me to sup with him at the principal hotel.

"He received me very graciously, and told me he had come down *incog.* for the express purpose of seeing me act.

"He was favourably impressed, and offered me an engagement for two years at Covent Garden on liberal and progressively increasing terms!

"Of course I was already engaged at the Haymarket; but the Haymarket season commenced in August, while Covent Garden did not open till October. The temptation was too strong to resist, so, trusting to the chapter of accidents to adjust things, I kept my own counsel about the Haymarket, and signed and sealed there and then for Covent Garden, and with mutual professions of regard Macready and I parted.

"At the beginning of August, 1837, Webster noticed me to open in Shylock on the 28th inst., and up I came to town by the mail on the 21st.

"When I landed at Hatchett's, in Piccadilly, to my astonishment I found the bold Ben awaiting my arrival.

"He was at a white heat with rage, and opened fire with —

"'So, sir! What's this I hear? You've signed with Macready for Covent Garden!'

"'I thought, sir —'

"'Thought, sir! Thought be blanked! You'd no right to think! You're engaged *to me*, sir, *to me!*'

"'I know it, sir; but I thought at the end of the Haymarket—'

"'End of the Haymarket!' he roared, or rather stuttered, 'end of my hat and my umbrella! If you try any games with me I'll injunct you! I'll throw you into chancery! I'll lock you up in the Queen's Bench!' and he danced round me as if he were going to jump on me.

"I was quite knocked over, feeling that I had placed myself in a false position, and that he had justice on his side, and yet amidst it all the irony of the situation tickled me.

"Twelve months ago I had slunk into London at the back of God-speed, now I had come up by the mail, and there was a great metropolitan manager anxiously awaiting my arrival. Twelve months ago I went from stage-door to stage-door soliciting an engagement of any description, and now the two foremost men of the age were fighting for me.

"I suppose something of the kind must have struck Webster, for he relaxed somewhat as he continued —

"'Humph! Perhaps after all I may be precious glad to get rid of you. So mind, rehearsal to-morrow, eleven o'clock sharp!' and off he went.

Next morning, as I was going in at the stage-door in Suffolk Street, I was served with a formal notice from Macready inhibiting me from appearing

at the Haymarket, and notifying Webster to that effect.

"Before the rehearsal was over Webster served me with another notice inhibiting me from appearing at Covent Garden, so that between them both I had rather a lively time of it.

"There was no clause in my agreement with 'Mac,' however, which could deter me from acting at the Haymarket, and I therefore opened in Shylock on August 28th, 1837, and was received with enthusiasm. I didn't think much of the newspapers at any time, and to tell you the truth, I've no distinct recollection of what they said then, but I do well remember that Webster said in the play bill—'Mr. Phelps having fully established himself in the estimation of the public as one of the first actors of the day, both in talent and attraction, he will repeat Shylock, and will appear shortly as Sir Edward Mortimer, Othello, Hamlet, and Richard.'

"I was only six weeks at the Haymarket, during which I acted twice or thrice a week, alternating the place of honour with poor Tyrone Power, who, as you know, was soon after lost in *The President*, and who was then at the height of his popularity.

"I played the Shaksperian parts twice each, and Mortimer, which was popularly associated with the traditions of the house (you remember, of course,

it was there where Elliston galvanized 'The Iron Chest' into life after John Kemble had failed so signally in it at Drury Lane!) four times.

"There was no love lost between Macready and Webster, yet I must say they both behaved very handsomely to me, and, to make a long story short, Webster consented to let me off in time to open at the Garden, upon the understanding that I should return to him during the vacation, which was, of course, a splendid arrangement for me.

"So there I was after all my trials and troubles, safely moored in port at last!"

PART SECOND.

EXPERIENCES DURING FORTY-ONE YEARS IN TOWN—1837 TO 1878.

"Then to the well-trod stage anon,
When Jonson's learnèd sock be on,
Or sweetest Shakspere fancy's child,
Warbling his native wood notes wild."

PART SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

AT COVENT GARDEN.

Début as Jaffier—A Realistic Broadsword Combat—A Discontented Subject—Macready's Generosity—Starring at Exeter—"Sell" on the Benefit Night—Joseph and Richelieu—An Indiscreet Partizan in the Pit—Back at the Haymarket—Rival Tragedians—Row with Charles Kean about the Rose of Arragon.

"Covent Garden opened on the 30th of September with, I think, 'The Winter's Tale.'

"I made my last appearance at the Haymarket, October 7th, and was placed next week on Macready's salary list, though I didn't open until the 27th, when I played Jaffier to his Pierre and the Belvidera of Helen Faucit. My next part was Othello to his Iago, Jim Anderson was Cassio, Helen

Faucit Desdemona, and Miss Huddart Emilia, and I dare to think that I held my own even in that combination.

"During the entire season of ten months, I only acted six or seven parts, though I'm bound to admit they were all good ones. I played Jaffier twice, Othello once, Rob Roy once, Adrastus once, Dumont in Jane Shore to 'Mac's' Hastings, Helen Faucit's Jane and Miss Huddart's Alicia, and Cassius twice to 'Mac's' Brutus, Elton's Antony, Jim Anderson's Octavius, and Miss Faucit's Portia.

"As to Macduff, I don't know how often I played him; I think every Monday night during the season. Of course you've heard of the row during the fight. 'Mac' let fly at me, nearly giving me a crack on the head, as he growled —

"'D—n your eyes! take that!'

"For the moment I was flabbergasted, but when he returned to the charge I gave him a dose of his own physic (adding to the oath not only his eyes, but his limbs too!). He returned the compliment by heaping maledictions on my seed, breed, and generation. Then he 'went' for me, and I 'went' for him, and there we were growling at each other like a pair of wild beasts, until I finished him, amidst a furore of applause.

"The audience were quite carried away by the

'cunning of the scene,' and shouted themselves hoarse, roaring on the one side 'Well done, 'Mac'!' on the other 'Let him have it, Phelps!'

"When the curtain fell I gave him my hand to get up. He was puffing and blowing like a grampus.

"As soon as he could recover his wind he commenced—

"'Er-er-r, Mr. Phelps, what did you mean by making use of that extraordinary language to me?'

"'What did you mean, Mr. Macready, by making use of such extraordinary language to *me?*'

"'I, sir?'

"'Yes, you, sir! You d—d my eyes?'

"'And you, sir, d—d my limbs!'

"'I could do no less than follow so good an example.'

"With this the absurdity of the thing struck us both and we burst out laughing.

"Everybody said the combat was most realistic, and I think it must have been. I know I had the greatest difficulty in preventing his slipping into me, for to tell you the truth, we were neither of us very graceful swordsmen, but what we lacked in elegance we made up for in earnestness.

"One thing is quite certain—we never got up the steam to such an extent again.

"The rest, the comfort, the home surroundings, and the permanent income made me swallow some bitter pills during my first season, but when at the opening of the second season I found Vandenhoff engaged to open in Coriolanus, and myself cast Tullus Aufidius, I felt myself wronged. I remonstrated. As a sweetener I got Leonatus Posthumus for my second part.

"A week afterwards 'Mac' took me out of Othello which he played himself, with Vandenhoff for Iago. A week later, up went 'The Tempest' and I found myself cast for that dismal duffer Antonio. Then came that bundle of dry bones Cato, (Isn't it astonishing that such turgid stuff should ever have had such a vogue?) and I was condemned to lift up Vandenhoff's tail in Marcus.

"All this I bore as well as I could till I actually found myself taken out of Jaffier (my opening part in the preceding season) and little Elton put over my head. My discontent then became unbearable. At this very moment I got an offer to star in Manchester and Liverpool and I made up my mind to accept it.

"My wife, seeing how miserable I was becoming, and that, in point of fact, I was making everybody else miserable, fell into my views, so the next morning I bearded the lion in his den, and told 'Mac' frankly I could no longer endure the state of things,

and had made up my mind to cut it, and go back to the country.*

* Although his dissatisfaction culminated at this period, yet Phelps must have been very much dissatisfied during even the first season, as the following undated letter to his friend Mr. Latimer, of Exeter (afterwards destined to become his relative), will show :—

"My dear Latimer,—

". . . . I am sorry to tell you I am not so happy or even comfortable as I expected, and ought to be. Macready is using me infamously. I have been now at Covent Garden since the 16th October, and have only acted four parts.

"I opened in Jaffier, and my reception was enthusiastic in the highest degree—the triumph being greater because Macready played Pierre with me.

"I then acted Othello with the same degree of success. 'Venice Preserved' was so highly spoken of and inquired for that he was obliged to do it a second time, but *would not play in the piece himself*" (the italics are Phelps'), "so weak a man is he that he cannot bear the idea of *sharing* the honour of a night with any one." (This scarcely tallies with 'Mac's' playing Friar Lawrence, Jacques, &c.)

"During the last month I have acted only once a week—Macduff on the Monday nights, and on one occasion Rob Roy.

"He has made several attempts to force me into subordinate parts, which I have resisted.

"I wonder you have seen nothing in the papers (Sunday); several of them have taken up my cause very warmly.

"So convinced am I that had I been properly treated I should by this time have stood upon a pinnacle, that I have been employing an attorney to see if there was any legal way of getting off my engagement; and last night took Sir William Follett's opinion on the subject, which I regret to say was unfavourable.

"The only alternative Macready will allow me is entering into a bond *not to act in London during the present Covent Garden season*, or to fulfil my engagement with him, which, if he pursues his present treatment (and he will do so), will bend my spirit downward to such a degree that its elasticity will be lost, and it will never spring into its place again.

"I have expended about £150 in costumes" (this, I suppose, must have been one of the debts which occasioned him afterwards so much inconvenience), "but I am afraid I must for some time hang 'em up at home to look at. . . . .

"Yours sincerely,

"S. Phelps."

"He growled—'Are you an ass, or do you take me for one? Do you imagine, that after fighting all these years for the throne, I'm going to abdicate for the purpose of putting you or any other man in my place? Are you aware of the struggle I had to hold my own against Young, Charles Kemble, and Kean? —of the degradation I had to encounter in being compelled to play second fiddle to that amateur boy Booth, to whose Lear they made me play Edmund —me! William Charles Macready! No, my dear fellow, watch and wait for your chance. It's sure to come some time, perhaps when you least expect it. Anyhow, to cut and run will look like failure!'

"'Cut and run,' said I; 'well—

> 'He who runs away
> May live to fight another day.'

"'That's true,' rejoined 'Mac;' 'but he who remains in the field of battle may change defeat to victory at any moment. There, now—come, come, don't talk nonsense, and we'll see if we can't make matters a little more pleasant for you.'

"So after all, fortunately for myself, as it turned out, ultimately I concluded to remain.

"What with bad engagements and prolonged vacations during the previous six or seven years, I had got into difficulties in various parts of the

country. Besides this I had to get into debt for my wardrobe and properties.

"My creditors let me alone during the first season, but as soon as the second one commenced they began to fire away, and I was in continual hot water.

"Actors were not paid then as they are now; but it was useless for me to tell these people that my salary was not a great one, and that I must free myself by degrees; it was enough for them that I was at Covent Garden, and down they came upon me like a load of bricks.

"I had a lawyer's letter to-day, a summons to-morrow, and a copy of a writ the day after. Sometimes the summons or the writ came first. Every shilling of my salary was used to stave off these vampires, to pay costs and to gain time. I was traced *into* the theatre, waylaid *out* of it. I was pestered and tortured here, there, and everywhere, and the worst of it was, while I was endeavouring to pay the old debts, I was compelled to contract new ones for the daily necessaries of life.

"At last there were two or three judgments out against me, and I was liable to arrest at any moment. Driven to despair I was obliged to absent myself from rehearsal; I was compelled to sneak

into the theatre amongst the audience at night, and to get out amidst the crowd as well as I could.

"'Mac' naturally got riled at this, and took my excuses in very bad part. In this emergency my wife's common-sense came to my aid, as it had so often done before.

"'Sam,' said she, 'go and tell Mr. Macready the truth. He's bound to know sooner or later, the sooner he knows the better. I've a presentiment that he'll help us, and in any case he has a right to know the facts.'

"This was a hard pill for me to swallow; but what can't be cured must be endured, so that night, when the play was over, I went to 'Mac' and made a clean breast of it.

"'Humph! a bad look out. What right had you to get into debt?' he gruffly inquired.

"'I couldn't help it,' I replied.

"'Couldn't help it, sir!' he growled; 'no man has a right to live beyond his income. A speculator may incur liabilities, but no man with a fixed income is ever justified in living beyond it.'

"'Sir,' said I, 'I came to see if you were disposed to help me over my trouble; since you are not, and God doesn't seem disposed to help me either, I suppose I must go to jail, and my wife and children to ——'

"'That be d—d, sir!' he roared, as I turned away to leave the room. 'Who said that you were to go to jail, or your wife and children to —— Don't talk stuff and nonsense! How much do you owe?'

"'I don't know,' I replied, despondently.

"'Don't know? A pretty fellow you are to come and talk about finance without studying figures. Away you go; come to me to-morrow morning at twelve with a full, true, and particular account of every debt you owe in the world. Don't leave out a single shilling. Let me know the worst, and we'll see what's to be done.'

"With that he wrung my hand warmly, and bade me good-night.

"When I got home we went through the muster roll of my liabilities, and to my horror I found they amounted to within a fraction of four hundred pounds.

"You may take your oath I did not sleep much that night.

"I presented myself according to appointment the next day, and handed the paper over to 'Mac.'

"He took it, read it carefully, looked glummer than usual, played the devil's tattoo with his feet, drummed with his fingers on the desk, then he got up and strode about the room for a minute or two; at last he burst out abruptly —

"'You're sure four hundred pounds will cover everything?'

"'Quite sure,' I replied.

"After a moment's pause he went over to his desk and unlocked it, produced his cash box, unlocked that also, got out his cheque book, wrote a cheque, and without another word shoved it into my hand with the list of my liabilities.

"The cheque was payable to my order, and was for £450. You remember how grim and grizzled he usually looked? At this moment his face was lighted up with that rare and beautiful smile which at times dignified and almost deified him.

"I was dazed, my head was swimming round, a great lump stuck in my throat, and I couldn't articulate a syllable, but instinctively I caught hold of his hand and nearly shook it off; then, without one word, good, bad, or indifferent, I staggered out of the room.

"I think if I had stayed a moment longer I must have tumbled down in a heap. I know when I got outside it was some minutes before I could pull myself together.

"This God-send didn't come a moment too soon, for as I left the theatre by the stage-door, I was arrested for thirty-six pounds. The bold bailiff, however, walked with me round to the bank, and that matter was soon settled.

"The only thing to accentuate the altered relations between Mac and myself, was that he became a little less grim and a little more considerate than usual. For all that I had some bitter bad parts to play.

"But there was one comfort, I was not alone unhappy, everyone had to put his or her nose more or less to the grindstone.

"Charles Matthews jibbed at Fag, but he did him for all that, and did it a deuced sight better than he could have done Jack Absolute; and he kicked awfully at Roderigo, but he had to do him, and a precious mess he made of the part.*

"I don't think Anderson swallowed Octavius

* Mathews told me that on this occasion he had "got himself up regardless—" with a beautiful flaxen ringlet wig. At the end of the fourth act, where Iago endeavours to assassinate "the poor brach of Venice," Phelps, by a miscalculation, let drive his sword into that portion of Roderigo's person which he was least able to defend. Although the wound was only skin deep, it was quite deep enough, and at every stab poor Charley squirmed and wriggled in torture.

"At last," said he, "the murdering villain directed his attention to Cassio and the other fellows. Now, thinks I, I'm safe, all's over. To my horror, however, presently I heard him exclaim—

'Lend me a light! Know we this face or no?
Alas, my friend, and my dear countryman.
Roderigo! No—yes—sure, oh, Heaven! Roderigo!'

"At this moment he placed his foot on my Hyperion locks, and anointed my face with the scalding grease! With a howl of agony I roared out—'Hold hard! I don't want to be basted as well as spitted!' with that, I sat bolt upright, leaving, however, my love-locks beneath the beast's hoof, and revealing a head as bald as a billiard ball! There was nothing more heard during the remainder of that scene, I promise you, and that was my last appearance as Roderigo." J. C.

Cæsar with avidity, and I am sure Helen Faucit did'nt gush at Portia ('Brutus Portia'), nor was Mrs. Warner particularly *entêté* with the Queen of France, a part of twenty lines in Henry V. In fact, we all growled, but we all submitted, Vandenhoff was chief growler in the Chorus, Warde followed suit in Williams, Elton as Exeter, Anderson as Gower (a part of thirty lines), and I growled as loudly as any one, as the Constable of France. But our discontent was the public gain, for it certainly was a most magnificent production. We've none of us been able to touch it, or even come within a hundred miles of it since.*

"Conspicuous among the great events of the season was the production of 'Richelieu,' in which I had another bitter bad part to play, of a few lines—that old thief Joseph. During the first run of this noble work, my old friend Hay came up to town and engaged me to play at Exeter in the vacation.

* My friend Mr. Higgie, the eminent comedian, himself a member of Phelps' company at the Wells, and for years afterwards stage-manager with Augustus Harris, the elder, at Covent Garden and the Princess's, and with myself in Liverpool, has enabled me to quote a singularly apposite corroboration of Phelps' opinion on this subject.

On the first night of this magnificent production, while Higgie sat spell-bound in the upper boxes admiring the unfolding of the superb panorama (Clarkson Stansfeld's last stage work), which immediately preceded the Siege of Harfleur, two elderly gentlemen beside him began openly to express their admiration.

One of them appeared to be rather deaf, and as he spoke

He was a man of taste, and of course was much struck with 'Richelieu'; indeed, he could talk of nothing else.

"When I got down to Exeter, where, as I told you, I had been very popular, I found myself announced for Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, Shylock, and to my horror, Richelieu for my benefit! Besides this, Richard was billed for Saturday.

"I had not acted any of these parts during the last season. They all required reading up, and as there were long rehearsals besides, I found it was utterly impossible for me to do Richelieu.

"'But every place is taken for Friday night,' urged Hay; 'what's to be done?'

"'Done!' said I, 'since you've been ass enough to make the announcement, you must play the Cardinal yourself, and I'll do my original part of Joseph.'

"There was no other way of getting out of the

rather loudly, this conversation became audible amidst the general silence:—

The deaf gentleman.—Charles, these are superb pictorial effects.

The other gentleman.—I believe you. They are magnificent; we were denied such help to acting in our time.

The deaf gentleman.—Alas, yes! but let us not therefore underrate the skill and the judgment which have invented them, for they ennoble and elevate the art itself. Here the player and the painter keep pace with the poet.

The other gentleman.—You are right, they do; and my envy expires in speechless admiration!

These two gentlemen were Charles Young and Charles Kemble!

J. C.

difficulty, so Hay set to work and hammered the words into his head. As for me, I had my work cut out to get through the other parts.

"Well, Friday night came, and there was an enormous house. When the Cardinal came on, they didn't take much notice of him; but they gave me a tremendous reception.

"That, however, was all they did give me.

"Hay was a capital actor, and though not Richelieu, he knew his way about, and steadily walked to the fore, while, of course, I retired and took a back seat.

"At length we reached the last scene. You remember that beast of a Joseph has only one good line, a line too, which usually elicits a great round of applause, and I flattered myself I should certainly 'have them' there. When, however, I stepped forward and exclaimed —

"'Fall back, son, it is our turn now!'

"I waited for the customary 'round.' Just as it was coming down, a fellow in the pit roared —

"'Hold on, boys, hold on! He's going to let out; I told you he'd let 'em have it hot before he had done!'

"This indiscreet partizan floored my only effect, and I dried up ignominiously without even a 'single hand,' while Hay walked over my head triumphantly, and collared all the applause.

"Still, as the house was crowded, and I got half the receipts, I pocketed the affront with perfect equanimity.

"When I got back to town, I went to the Haymarket with 'Mac,' Mrs. Warner, and Helen Faucit.

"We opened early in August, 1839, with 'Othello;' he was the Moor, I was Iago, Miss Faucit Desdemona, and Mrs. Warner Emilia.

"Three nights afterwards I was cast that detestable Beauseant in 'The Lady of Lyons'.

"'Thus bad begins, but worse remains behind.'

"Imagine my mortification when I found myself —in the very theatre where I had opened in Shylock, where I had made my mark and been 'starred' as Hamlet and Richard—condemned repeatedly to Antonio—The Ghost and Henry VI. to Macready and Kean.

"'Tis true I played Jacques and Master Walter with Ellen Tree, but they don't count for much, and my only original part was a very bad one, Onslow, in Bulwer Lytton's play, 'The Sea Captain,' which, despite Thackeray's 'slogging,' drew great houses, and was acted for the 38th time for Webster's benefit, January 15th, last night of the season.

"On the 20th I went with 'Mac' to the Lane, where poor Hammond was fighting against fate.

"We played 'Macbeth' for a few nights, and the new play of 'Mary Stuart,' in which 'Mac' was very fine as Ruthven, so was Mrs. Warner as Mary, though I fear I didn't do much with Darnley.

"At the beginning of March the management collapsed, and poor Hammond was *non est*, though he ultimately turned up in Basinghall Street with a balance-sheet of £8,000 debts, assets *nil*.

"'Mac' gave his services to the company for three or four nights. Then we returned to the little house in the Haymarket, where he opened in Hamlet, Warde was Claudius, I was the Ghost, Mrs. Warner Gertrude, and Priscilla Horton Ophelia.

"During this season Webster engaged Kean and Mrs. Kean to star against Macready upon alternate nights.

"Although we had great 'business,' there was constant snapping and snarling between the high contracting parties.

"Macready produced Talford's play, 'Glencoe,' and distinguished himself highly as Halbert Macdonald. Besides this he did a play of Serle's, which was not up to much, called 'Master Clarke.' I played Glenlyon in 'Glencoe,' and some nondescript in the other play. I had a few leading parts, such as Master Walter, Joseph Surface, that idiot Faulkland, and that platitudinal humbug Peregrine.

"I had to swallow Baron Steinfort and Major Oakley as well as I could; but when it came to Egerton, to Maywood's Sir Pertinax, I was inclined to kick over the traces, and go back once more to the country.

"While I was hesitating, I made a great hit in Old Dornton. That and the great length of the season (for I must tell *ye* that through the influence of Bulwer Lytton and Macready, and principally through the great success of 'Money,' the Lord Chamberlain's stupid restrictions were rescinded, and the theatre was now open all the year round), which extended over nearly two years, decided me to remain.

"During one of our short vacations, I forget which, I went to the Lyceum for a short experimental season, which was under the management of a body of unacted and unactable authors, who called themselves 'The Syncretics.'

"These gentlemen were determined not to be 'kept out,' as they said, by the managers, so they resolved to produce their own pieces; and as they paid liberally as long as their money lasted—and it didn't last long—no one could say them 'nay.'

"The syndicate was formed principally of authors, each of whom was to produce a piece of his own, but one play, called 'Martinuzzi,' was found to be quite

enough to decide the fate of the experiment, and the season ended sooner even than we anticipated.

"I finished my long engagement at the Haymarket December 7th, and rejoined 'Mac' at old Drury on Boxing Night, 1841, when we opened with a magnificent revival of 'The Merchant of Venice.'"

CHAPTER II.

AT DRURY LANE AND ELSEWHERE.

BACK WITH "MAC"—INAUGURATION OF HIS MANAGEMENT AT DRURY LANE — THE PRISONER OF WAR — AFTER MANY YEARS DOUGLAS JERROLD GETS A ROLAND FOR HIS OLIVER — RYDER'S FIRST REHEARSAL— LA BELLE NISBETT AND HELEN FAUCIT—AN EXCEPTIONAL CAST OF "AS YOU LIKE IT"—END OF MACREADY'S MANAGERIAL CAREER—PHELPS' OPINION THEREOF.

"'MAC' had taken the National Theatre, which had fallen to a very low ebb, with the view of devoting it to the national drama. There was not a man or woman amongst us who had served under his banner at the 'Garden' but did not want to be with him at the 'Lane;' and I certainly esteemed it a compliment when he told me that I was the first man to whom he offered an engagement."

"But how about the bad parts?"

"Oh, d—n the bad parts! Of course they worried me as much as usual, but I had grown

older and wiser, and knew better. I knew now it was unreasonable to expect 'Mac' to abdicate in my favour. To be frank, I wouldn't have done it myself.

"Of course, I had to take what I could get in the way of business, sometimes good, sometimes bad, sometimes indifferent.

"I played Lord Norland in Mrs. Inchbald's comedy of 'Every one has his Fault,' 'Mac' going out of his way to play Harmony, and playing the devil with it; then he transferred it to poor Elton, who also came to grief in it. I played Stukely, in which I held my own beside 'Mac,' and I got a good deal of kudos out of the Earl of Lynterne in the 'Patrician's Daughter,' in which 'Mac' made a tremendous hit as Mordaunt. I think it was one of the best things I ever saw him do. As usual I made my mark in Iago and Macduff, and I made a hit as Hubert in a gorgeous revival of 'King John.'

"One of the most notable events of this season was the production of Douglas Jerrold's comedy, 'The Prisoner of War,' in which I astonished everybody as Captain Channel.

"Jerrold and I had never met since we parted in a huff in Lombard Street all those years ago.

"At the end of the play Master 'Dug' came round to pay me a cynical compliment or two.

"I grinned, and said, 'Well, little scorpion,

you're a good playwright, but a bad prophet. You don't seem to think me such a "d—d bad actor" to-night; I'm getting considerably more than "thirty bob a-week," and this is not a "second-rate country theatre!"'

"'Bah!' he growled, as he turned away, 'the biggest fools always have the biggest luck.'

"As my star was then rising, I could afford to laugh at his cheek.

"It has been said that Jerrold's cynicism really veiled a tender heart. For my part, I was always of Sir Peter Teazle's opinion, that 'True wit has more to do with good nature' than Douglas Jerrold ever 'appeared to be aware of.'

"One thing is quite certain, if ever he could say a smart or satirical thing at the expense of his nearest or dearest friend, the spiteful little wasp never deprived himself of the pleasure of inserting his venomed sting.

"The cast of 'Venice Preserved' had always been a bone of contention from the first moment that I joined Macready. This season Elton, to his great grief, was taken out of Jaffier and put into Priuli, which nearly broke the poor little fellow's heart; Anderson was given Jaffier, and I was relegated to Pierre, to which I have stuck ever since.

"The morning of the very night when we were to act this play, when I came to rehearsal, I was astonished to find a great long-legged fellow ladling out Pierre, to a select audience, consisting of 'Mac,' Serle, George Ellis, the Prompter, and Macready's stage-manager, 'Old Pegleg Wilmot,' so called from his wooden leg.

"I didn't know what to make of it, till Ellis came and told me, it was a young man from the country giving Mac 'a taste of his quality,' in the hope of getting an engagement.

"The young man was Jack Ryder, and I'm happy to say he got his engagement, though he gave me 'fits' for a minute or two. Stop! Let me think!

"He didn't join us till the next season, when he opened in 'The Banished Duke.'

"At the end of the season I returned to the Haymarket.

"Nothing noteworthy occurred during my stay, except a row with Charles Kean during the run of Sheridan Knowles' 'Rose of Arragon,' which was written expressly for Kean.

"Unfortunately for him, my part, Almagro, was too strong, or his too weak; anyhow, I got the pull, and he didn't like it. I don't suppose I should have liked it myself, especially if I had to pay the

piper, which Kean did, for he bought the play right out and paid the author handsomely.*

"During this engagement I played Sir Giles twice to Billy Farren's Marrall, and for my benefit I played Sir Edward Mortimer and The Duke Aranza, Farren doing Adam Winterton and the beautiful Nisbett Juliana.

"I returned to 'Mac' in October, for his last season at old Drury, when we opened with the most superb production of 'As You Like It' the world has ever seen or ever will see.

"This season I played Manly (Provoked Husband), Damas, and Dentatus, Leonato, and Sir Robert Gascoigne, Henry IV. Then came a barbarous thing; I was taken out of Posthumus (which was given to Anderson) and relegated to Belarius. We had a dreadful row about this, which resulted in another sweetener—Thorold in Browning's fine but crude play, 'A Blot in the Scutcheon.'

"I distinguished myself highly in it, but the play did not attract, and was acted only three nights, although it was backed up with a new farce, and by the opera of Der Freischutz.

"Besides that beastly Byerdale you saw me in, I

* I remember Kean complaining to me very bitterly about this transaction, alleging that Knowles had written up Almagro for the express purpose of flooring, or, as he said, "flummaxing" him. J. C.

played Dunstan in the tragedy of 'Athelwold'—not yours or Dumas', my boy, but Smith's.

"Despite my discontent at my bad parts, man at the best is an inconsequential animal; so when my benefit was fixed, instead of devoting it to my own glorification, I thought how I could best get everybody into my programme, and I dare to think, even at this distance of time, the result was such a cast of "The Winter's Tale" as the stage has never witnessed except upon that particular occasion. There was 'Mac,' of course, for Leontes; Ryder for Polixenes; Anderson for Florizel; Elton for Camillo; The Clown, Shepherd, and Autolycus, by Keeley, W. Bennett, and Compton; and Antigonus myself; Helen Faucit for Hermione; Mrs. Warner for Paulina; and Mrs. Nisbett for Perdita; while Mrs. Keeley and Priscilla Horton were the Mopsa and Dorcas.

"Think of that, my boy! Did you ever hear of anything like it?

"Besides this, we did Planché's Fortunio. Not a bad bill, was it?

"By this time Macready and I had learned to understand each other, and it was a great grief to me when the last night of his management came."

"Was it really so wonderful after all as the old fogies tell us?" I here enquired.

"Don't be irreverent, boy; it is the vice of the age; you'll be an old fogie yourself some day if *ye* live long enough.

"I tell *ye* sir, there were certain performances given under that management which were never equalled in the past, and never can be excelled in the future!

"I'll take one production in which both 'Mac,' and myself played second fiddle, I mean 'As *Ye* Like It.'

"Apart from Clarkson Stansfeld's scenery, the music and the mounting—look at the cast. Good God, sir, look at the cast! There was Nisbett as Rosalind! Not having seen her, *ye* don't know what beauty is. Her voice was liquid music—her laugh—there never was such a laugh—'her eyes living crystals—lamps lit with light divine'—her gorgeous neck and shoulders—her superbly symmetrical limbs—her grace, her taste, her nameless but irresistible charm. There was Mrs. Stirling as Celia—let me tell you a deuced fine woman in those days—then and always a most accomplished actress. That imp of mischief, Mrs. Keeley, the best Audrey, and about the best all-round actress I have ever seen; the beautiful Miss Philips as Phœbe; the velvet-throated Romer as Cupid, in 'The Masque. Priscilla Horton, Sims Reeves, Harry Phillips, Allen

and Stretton (a complete English Opera Company) for the music. Jim Anderson (you've no idea what a splendid actor he was then) for Orlando, and his brothers, Jacques and Oliver, by Harry Lynne and Elliot Graham, a strapping six-footer and an admirable actor. Ryder was the banished Duke, Duke Frederick was George Bennett, Elton the First Lord, and Le Beau, Handsome Hudson, as we used to call him; Touchstone, Keeley; William, Compton; Old Billy Bennett, Corin; 'Mac,' Jacques; myself, Adam; and I forget the others.

"Aye, aye; *ye* may rave about Helen Faucit's Rosalind, but *ye* never saw the Nisbett. I admit Miss Faucit's ability is great and unquestionable, but so is her affectation. The truth is she gave herself airs—and a little of that went a long way with me. We didn't get on well together, and I fear we have never been just to each other; still she is a great actress, and a woman whose character and conduct do honour to her profession.

"At that period, mind *ye*, she hadn't it all her own way, for besides La Nisbett she had another formidable rival in Mrs. Warner, then in the prime of her beauty, and the *beau ideal* of a tragic actress —her Constance, Hermione, and Lady Macbeth were the best I have ever seen.

"Take the company at Drury Lane for all in all,

I tell *ye*, sir, as far as I am qualified to form an opinion, at no period before or since, not even in the palmy days of Garrick, or the Kembles, or the Siddons, has the dramatic art been more poetically and intellectually expounded, or magnificently illustrated than it was during the Macready *régime.*

"That Betterton, Booth, and Quin were great actors, that Garrick was a genius, that the Siddons was a woman of phenomenal gifts, that the Kembles Young and Elliston were gentlemen and scholars first, and admirable actors after, that Kean and Cooke were lurid meteors, illumining the age and the stage, and that all these great people were surrounded by actors of most distinguished ability, is as true as that the stars are shining over our heads at this moment, but I doubt whether at any time the works of our great masters have ever received in their entirety such admirable rendition and such perfect illustration in every detail as they obtained during the matchless management of William Charles Macready!"

CHAPTER III.

'TWIXT TOWN AND COUNTRY.

HARRY WALLACK OPENS AND SHUTS COVENT GARDEN—THE COVENT GARDEN COMPANY GO TO BATH AND PLAY DOWN TO FIVE POUNDS A NIGHT—GENTLEMAN HOOPER AND THE LONG LORD—SUSAN HOPLEY AND THE BEAUTIFUL BARMAID—"MAC" GOES TO AMERICA—PHELPS REMAINS BEHIND—DEATH OF ELTON—THE ELTON BENEFIT—PHELPS' FIRST APPEARANCE AT SADLERS WELLS—INAUGURATION OF THE WARNER AND PHELPS *Régime*.

"AFTER 'Mac's' retirement I was out of a berth for some time till I went to Covent Garden with Harry Wallack, whose son-in-law, long Hoskins (who was with us afterwards at the Wells, and who is now in Australia), found some coin for the speculation. We had a splendid company, but the affair was an awful fizzle. We opened October 2nd with a new comedy by Boucicault, called 'Woman,' which proved a killing 'frost;' and we 'shut up' on the 13th. We opened again on the 16th, and finally closed November 1st. I think we made about five seasons in four weeks."

Here, I interjected, "I remember the very night you closed, for I walked all the way from Westbourne Green, and when I reached the theatre there was a notice up stating that 'in consequence of unavoidable circumstances, the house was closed until further notice.' That was the second time within twelve months I was 'sold.' I went to Drury Lane to see 'Much Ado About Nothing,' with Macready, Mrs. Nisbett, Keeley, Compton, and the rest of you, when, to my disgust, I found the theatre closed in consequence of the death of the Duke of Sussex. I confess I thought his Royal Highness might have taken some other night to die upon."

"Fie, sir! You are not a loyal subject. As for us, we were all sorry for the old Duke; he was the best of the whole boiling of the brothers.

"Well, after we closed at the Garden, we got out of the frying-pan into the fire, for we went to Bath with Gentleman Hooper, where we played down to five pounds a night. Imagine the Covent Garden Company playing down to £5! Astonishing! wasn't it?"

"Not half so astonishing though" I replied, "as what followed when you left Bath."

"What was that?" he inquired, eagerly.

"Many years after, when acting with her in

Cambridge, Mrs. Hooper told me that when you Covent Garden swells 'dried up,' Hooper went away shooting with 'the Long Lord' (Huntingtower) and left her to manage the theatre as best she might.

"At this time a dramatization of Mrs. Crowe's novel of 'Susan Hopley' had obtained a great vogue at the Victoria.

"Mrs. Hooper was an astute little woman; she read the novel, was impressed by it, and sent Charles Melville (Captain Brew) her stage manager, to town to get a copy of the play.

"He obtained a MS. from the poor adapter, Mr. Dibdin Pitt, for a five-pound note (authors must have had a lively time of it in those days), got the music, and models of the scenery for a song, and returned in triumph.

"Next day they began to get up the piece. Every scene was painted, and the play was fairly cast. Frank Matthews and his wife, however, were the only persons of importance in the crowd who had remained behind. They played in the piece, and Mrs. Hooper herself was the Susan Hopley.

"Now there was, at this time, at the 'Hoop' Hotel a very attractive young girl, who was the daughter of a gentleman farmer in the neighbourhood. The girl was a beauty, and she knew it. It goes without saying that she was a born flirt.

Her father having come to grief, she became the barmaid of the 'Hoop.' More, she was all the rage among the young fellows of the city, who crowded the place, and quarrelled amongst each other merely to get a glance of her bright eyes. To accentuate her beauty, this young lady wore a peculiar and becoming costume, a blue dress cut in some novel and eccentric fashion, a saucy little cap with a bunch of cherry-coloured ribbons perched on one side of her pretty little head, a white frilled cambric apron with a bib, also frilled and also trimmed with ribbons.

"Melville was a shrewd, sharp fellow. He saw this coquettish young hussey, and like every one else was struck with her charms. Then an idea occurred to him. If he could only get Mrs. Hooper to 'make up' like the beautiful barmaid for Susan Hopley. He suggested the idea. The manageress, who was nothing if not proper, kicked at it. Then Frank Matthews was brought to bear upon her; the strait was a desperate one. She hesitated, and you know when a woman hesitates the rest is easy. Melville now tackled the fair barmaid; she felt flattered, jumped at the notion, and undertook to superintend the making of the dress, which was to be an exact duplicate of her own.

"Absurd as it may appear, that dress and get up

had a great deal to do with the remarkable success of the piece, which was of an extraordinary and pronounced character.

"The story was interesting, the play admirably got up. One scene, which was preserved intact until the theatre was burnt down the other day, the scene of the churchyard, was as superb a set as I have ever put eyes on.

"The theatre was crowded nightly for a month or five weeks, and there can be no doubt whatever that the beautiful barmaid, the ghost of the murdered flunkey, and that popular performer the Jerusalem pony, proved ten times more potent attractions for the quidnuncs of Bath than the company from the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden."

"Aye, aye," growled 'the master,' "I have invariably noticed that a donkey, if he only brays loud enough, is always sure to attract a congregation of his brother donkeys. But you've cut into the thread of my yarn, Master John.

"After that Bath business I acted occasionally when I could get a chance, sometimes at the 'City of London,' sometimes at Liverpool, where, unfortunately, I only succeeded in ventilating the house.

"When I came back to town I found a note awaiting me from 'Mac' in which he stated that he

was going to America. He invited me to dinner at Clarence Terrace, to meet Maywood, the Scotch comedian, who had negotiated the American engagement.

"By-the-bye, this fellow was a capital actor. I am under the impression that, before he went to Yankeeland, he had acted 'Shylock' at one of the patent houses with indifferent success, and had then dropped into the Scotchmen. His Sir Pertinax was splendid, and he had recently distinguished himself at the Strand by his performance of Sir Andrew Mac something or other in a piece called the 'Rights of Women.'

"After dinner 'Mac' proposed that I should accompany him to America, offered me very handsome terms, and undertook to pay a thousand pounds in the bank, so that my wife should have ample resources to draw upon during my absence.

"Apart from the fact that we had become very much attached to each other, the proposal was a tempting one. Besides, there seemed little or no chance of an opening in town, and I was rather disposed to close with him, so when we parted for the night I thanked him, said I would consult my wife and let him know the next day.

"When we left the house, Maywood, who had a gruff, brusque way with him, growled abruptly—

"'You're not going to be such an ass as to accept this proposal?'

"'Why not?' I inquired.

"'Why not? Don't you see that his absence will be your opportunity? He's going abroad! If you remain at home you'll step into his shoes.'

"I didn't say anything then, but when I got home I talked the matter over with my wife. Maywood's hint accorded with her inclinations; she couldn't bear the thought of our separation. So the next day I wrote thus —

"'DEAR MR. MACREADY,

"'Some years ago when I thought of returning to the country, you said to me, "He who remains in the field may change defeat to victory at any moment."

"'*I* have decided to remain on the field.

"'Notwithstanding, believe me very grateful for your proposal, and faithfully yours, &c.'

"A week afterwards 'Mac' sailed for America, taking Ryder with him, and I remained behind, waiting, like Mr. Micawber, for 'something to turn up.'

"It 'turned up' in a strange and unexpected manner.

"It so happened that in the early part of '43 our dear friend and comrade poor Elton, in returning

from an engagement in Edinboro', was lost in the wreck of the *Pegasus* off Holy Isle.*

"Although a most honourable, provident, and abstemious man, he had been so miserably paid and so frequently out of engagements that it was utterly impossible for him to make any provision for his old blind father, his wife and children, of whom there were seven.

* This unfortunate gentleman, although of diminutive stature, was said to be an admirable and accomplished actor. Macready esteemed him so highly that he especially selected him to play Amintor in "The Maid's Tragedy" and Beauseant in "The Lady of Lyons."

"The General Theatrical Fund" owes its existence in great measure to Mr. Elton's initiative, and that of a poor gentleman who was afterwards prompter in one of my theatres.

Tyrone Power, who was lost in the *President* (March, 1841), was one of Elton's oldest and dearest friends. It was said, in an interesting publication of the period, that when Elton heard the news "his face became pale as ashes, and for more than an hour he walked to and fro in violent agitation, exclaiming "Poor fellow, poor fellow! Who would have thought it?"

Afterwards, conversing on the subject, he expressed himself in these remarkable words: "I think I can imagine what Power must have felt when the waves first rushed over his head. In all supreme moments our grief is caused for the loss of joys in futurity. We neither think of the past nor the present, but only bewail what might have been.

"I am sure that Power, in the agony of parting from life, felt no consolation that it had been a brilliant and a happy one. I can imagine him crying out, 'Why can't I live to enjoy more?'

"I can fancy the lights of the Haymarket flashing before his eyes, and the roaring of the waves taking the sound of a burst of applause, and that his last frantic thought was, 'Oh! why—why was I not permitted to enjoy all this?'"

Let us hope that poor Elton, in his own hour of trial, looked forward with more hope for the future than regret for the past.—J.C.

"Every manager and every actor in the Kingdom came nobly to the help of these poor bereaved ones.

"Murray, of Edinboro', got together £100, and sent it up at once. The managers everywhere gave the entire receipts of a benefit, and a subscription of upwards of £3,000 was raised. To the honour of Elton's children, be it said, they would not touch a farthing till a small annuity was purchased for his poor blind father.

"Mrs. Warner, myself, and a few others, put our heads together to raise something for their immediate wants, and we gave a benefit performance at the 'City of London' Theatre with desirable results.

"We now announced one to take place at Sadlers Wells.

"The Wells at that period had sunk to the lowest ebb. The business was so awful that the company were playing down to two or three pounds a night, and there was the greatest difficulty in keeping the doors open at all.

"It was in this state of affairs that on one Saturday in April, 1843, the Elton benefit took place.

"To the astonishment and delight of every one the receipts amounted to £55.

"That house and that performance decided my career for the next eighteen years!

"The play was 'Othello.' I was the Moor; Henry Marston, Iago; John Webster, Cassio; Miss Caroline Ranckley, Desdemona; and Mrs. Warner, Emilia.

"Serle wrote an admirable address and delivered it more admirably still. To say that they leaped at us would give but the faintest idea of the enthusiasm with which we were received.

"Tom Greenwood was the manager, and when we settled up, he said, 'This is going to be a big thing. Come and act here and I'll give you twenty pounds a week.'

"I had no engagement in view, nor any likelihood of obtaining one, but I knew that Greenwood had no money, so I took stock of the situation at once.

"'My good fellow,' said I, 'don't talk nonsense; I know the state of the land here, and what you are doing. If the money don't come in, you can't pay. I'll tell you what I'll do; if you'll undertake to secure the theatre, we'll go into partnership.'

"Tom jumped at the idea, and in the course of forty-eight hours the Phelps, Warner, and Greenwood management was arranged on the following basis: I was to have £20 a week, Mrs. Warner the same. As a sweetener for her, her husband had £5

a week as treasurer, Greenwood had £5 a week as acting manager and five pounds a week for his wardrobe. These sums were charged to the current expenses on the pay-sheet weekly. If they didn't come in of course we couldn't get 'em, if they did we should get 'em, and if there was any surplus it was to be divided *pro rata*.

"The new Theatre Act, which removed the restrictions to our performing the legitimate drama, had been carried, thanks to the personal influence of Macready and Edward Lytton Bulwer (for which statues ought to be erected to their memory in every theatre in the kingdom!), and a glorious vision opened before me of a popular theatre with Shakespere and the poetic drama.

"I kept this object steadily in view night and day. With this object I quitted the West-end for the North, and on Monday, May 27th, 1844, our memorable management commenced — a management the record of which will, I dare to hope, be remembered long after I am dead and gone."

CHAPTER IV.

SADLERS WELLS.

CHARLES DICKENS' DESCRIPTION OF WHAT IT WAS — PHELPS' IDEA OF HIS MISSION — LOVE OF ART FOR ART'S SAKE—MISCONCEPTION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN MACREADY AND PHELPS REMOVED — STATE OF DRAMATIC ART AFTER MACREADY'S RETIREMENT — KEAN AT THE PRINCESS'S — HOW PHELPS EFFECTED HIS ACHIEVEMENTS—HIS FISHING EXCURSIONS.

WHAT Sadlers Wells was when Phelps took the helm may best be understood by the following description written by Charles Dickens in 1851 :

"Seven or eight years ago, this theatre was in the condition of being entirely delivered over to as ruffianly an audience as London could shake together. Without, the theatre by night was like the worst of the worst kind of fair in the worst kind of town. Within, it was a bear-garden, resounding with foul language, oaths, cat-call shrieks, yells, blasphemy, obscenity—a truly diabolical clamour. Fights took place anywhere, at any

period of the performance. The audience were, of course, directly addressed in the entertainments. An improving melodrama, called "Barrington, the Pickpocket," being then extremely popular at another similar theatre, a powerful attraction, happily entitled "Jack Ketch," was produced here, and received with great approbation. It was in the contemplation of the management to add the physical stimulus of a pint of porter to the moral refreshments offered to every purchaser of a pit ticket, when the management collapsed, and the theatre shut up.

"At this crisis of the career of Mr. Ketch and his pupils, Mr. Phelps conceived the desperate idea of changing the character of the dramatic entertainments presented at this den, from the lowest to the highest, and of utterly changing, with it, the character of the audience.

"Associating with himself, in this perilous enterprise, two partners—of whom one (for a time) was Mrs. Warner, a lady of considerable reputation on the stage; the other, Mr. Greenwood, a gentleman of business knowledge and habits—he took the theatre and went to work.

"On the opening night, on the scene of Mr. Ketch's triumphs, the play was 'Macbeth.' It was performed amidst the usual hideous medley of

fights, foul language, catcalls, shrieks, yells, oaths, blasphemy, obscenity, apples, oranges, nuts, biscuits, ginger-beer, porter, and pipes—pipes of every description were at work in the gallery, and pipes of all sorts and sizes were in full blast in the pit. Cans of beer, each with a pint measure to drink from (for the convenience of gentlemen who had neglected the precaution of bringing their own pots in their bundles), were carried through the dense crowd at all stages of the tragedy. Sickly children in arms were squeezed out of shape in all parts of the house. Fish was fried at the entrance doors. Barricades of oyster-shells encumbered the pavement. Expectant half-price visitors to the gallery howled defiant impatience up the stairs, and danced a sort of carmagnole all round the building.

"It being evident either that the attempt to humanise the place must be abandoned, or this uproar quelled—that Mr. Ketch's disciples must have their way, or the manager his—the manager made vigorous efforts for the victory.

"The friers of fish, vendors of oysters, and other costermonger scum accumulated round the doors, were first got rid of. The noisy sellers of beer inside the theatre were next to be removed. They resisted, and offered a large weekly consideration 'for leave to sell and call.' The management

was obdurate, and rooted them out. Children in arms were next to be expelled. Orders were given to the money-takers to refuse them admission, but these were found extremely difficult to be enforced, as the women smuggled babies in under their shawls and aprons, and even rolled them up to look like cloaks. A little experience of such artifices led to their detection at the doors; and the play soon began to go on without the shrill interruptions consequent on the unrolling of dozens of these unfortunate little mummies every night. But the most intolerable defilement of the place remained. The outrageous language was unchecked; and while that lasted, any effectual purification of the audience, and establishment of decency was impossible."

"Mr. Phelps, not to be diverted from his object, routed out an old Act of Parliament, in which there was a clause visiting the use of bad language in any public place with a certain fine on proving the offence before a magistrate. This clause he caused to be printed in great placards, and posted up in various conspicuous parts of the theatre. He also had it printed in small handbills. To every person who went into the gallery, one of these handbills was given with his pass-ticket. He was seriously warned that the Act would be enforced, and it *was* enforced with such rigour that on several

occasions Mr. Phelps stopped the play to have an offender removed; on other occasions he went into the gallery, with a cloak over his theatrical dress, to point out some other offender who had escaped the vigilance of the police; on all occasions he kept his purpose, and his inflexible determination steadily to carry it out before the vagabonds with whom he had to deal; on no occasions showed them fear or favour.

"Within a month, the Jack Ketch party, thoroughly disheartened and amazed, gave in; and not an interruption was heard from the beginning to the end of a five-act tragedy!

"The manager having now established order and silence, proceeded with his purpose of establishing a home for the high drama at Sadlers Wells. In his first season he presented Shakespere's plays of 'Hamlet,' 'King John,' 'The Merchant of Venice,' 'Othello,' and 'Richard the Third'—in all 106 nights.

"Besides which he further produced as imperfect substitutes for Jack Ketch, Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger, Sheridan, Holcroft, Byron, Bulwer, and Knowles.

"In his second season, besides producing three original plays, he presented 'The Winter's Tale' forty-five nights.

"In the successive seasons between that time and

the present he has produced other original tragedies, and has many times performed 'The Tempest,' 'Macbeth' (without the music), as originally written, 'Coriolanus,' 'Cymbeline,' 'Julius Cæsar,' 'Henry the Eighth,' 'Antony and Cleopatra,' and Mr. Horne's reconstruction of 'The Duchess of Malfi.' In the spring of the present year we had the means of knowing that Mr. Phelps had acted Shakespere at Sadlers Wells 1,000 nights!

"It is to be observed that these plays have not been droned through in the old jog trot, dreary, matter-of-course manner, but have been presented with the utmost care, with great intelligence, with an evidently sincere desire to understand and illustrate the beauties of the poem. The smallest character has been respectfully approached and studied; the smallest accessory has been well considered; every artist in his degree has been taught to adapt his part, in the complete effect to all the other parts, uniting to make up the whole. The outlay has been very great; but always having had a sensible purpose, and a plain reason, has never missed its mark. The illusion of the scene has invariably been contrived in a most striking, picturesque, and ingenious manner. A completeness has been attained which twenty times the cost

would never have bought if Mr. Phelps were not a gentleman in spirit, and an accomplished and devoted student of his art."

As I have before mentioned, Phelps was born in 1804; consequently when he made his first appearance at Pontefract in 1823, he was nineteen years of age. He had, therefore, gone through nearly fourteen years' provincial experience when he made his first appearance at the Haymarket, August 28th, 1837. He acted there, at Covent Garden, and at Drury Lane (with an occasional spurt in the country) for seven years, so that when he commenced his managerial career at Sadlers Wells in 1844, he was exactly forty years of age.

In speaking of the limited amount of profit, and the infinite amount of reputation accruing from his management, he has often said to me, "Was it nothing to have the opportunity of transferring my impressions of the great masters, night after night, year after year, to the young fresh intellects of the age, to generations of men and women who had never seen these wonderful works acted, to many who had never even read them, to many others who had seen and read them all their lives, yet liked and loved them all the more through my presentment? Was it nothing to feel, to know, that I had succeeded in making a wretched tumble-down suburban theatre

the intellectual centre of this mighty metropolis, and therefore, to some extent, the centre of the world.

"Aye, aye! I knew *ye* would say the centre of the world is Charing Cross. I know it myself now —perhaps I knew it then, but *ye* see, dear boy, I had no noble patrons to help me, and I was afraid of getting out of my depth. I had been in debt once, and knew all its attendant train of horrors, and I therefore resolved, for the sake of my wife and children, that, if I could help it, I would never be in debt again. I remembered too well the desperate strait I was in when Macready rescued me from ruin."

Apropos, it may not be amiss to here remove an erroneous impression which appears to have recently obtained circulation as to the nature of the relations which prevailed between these two eminent men.

There is an entry in Macready's diary, dated August 29th, 1837, to this effect:—

"Sent for the *Morning Herald*, and read the account of Mr. Phelps' appearance, which seems to be a decided success. It depressed my spirits, though perhaps it should not do so. If he is greatly successful I shall reap the profits; if moderately, he will strengthen my company. But the actor's fame and his dependent income is *(sic)* so precarious, that we start at every shadow of opposition. It is an unhappy life!"

This extract has been much commented on to Macready's disadvantage. Now, the fact is he was a martyr to dyspepsia; and he was also of a fretful, nervous, irritable disposition; this irritability and anxiety were increased tenfold by the heavy responsibility he had taken upon his shoulders in connection with his ensuing management.

He was also, I have no doubt, anxious to guard his well-won laurels, and fearful lest any one should arise to snatch the crown which he had just won by years of unremitting assiduity and toil, and nothing can be more natural than this anxious self-communing on Phelps' success. But the two men had only to know to esteem each other.

I have already quoted from the latter's own mouth the story of Macready's generosity. Let me quote from Macready himself his estimate of Phelps' work and mission. In writing to his friend Pollock, long after he had retired from the stage, Macready makes use of these memorable words:—

"I believe we must look for the drama, if we really wish to find it, in that remote suburb of Islington!"

Contrast, too, with the entry in his diary already quoted, this later one, written February 5, 1867, in connection with his farewell benefit:—

"Forster called. He told me of the offer of Mr.

Phelps, thinking my night was postponed for want of a company, to close his theatre and place his company at my disposal. It does him great honour."

Macready further asked Phelps to play Macduff on that occasion.

If proof be still wanting of the great tragedian's appreciation of his former lieutenant, I am a living witness, for, on the night of his retirement from public life, I myself heard Macready, in gracious and glowing terms, designate Phelps as "the man on whom the mantle of the prophet had fallen."

To assert that these distinguished men never had their points of departure, would be to assert that they were not human. The fact is, they were very human, were both very hot-tempered, and I have no doubt had an occasional breeze, which served to make the air clearer afterwards; but I have reason to know that they had both the most profound regard for each other's eminent abilities and noble qualities.

Phelps himself frequently assured me, long after Macready's death, that had he been in Macready's place he would have done what Macready did, and it is quite certain that when Phelps ascended to the vacant throne, he guarded his crown and sceptre quite as jealously as his predecessor had ever done.

Doubtless it may be urged that it ill becomes me

to advance this argument, since I am the only living actor in favour of whom Phelps made an exception upon one memorable occasion.

My gratitude, however, for that act of grace cannot warp my sense of justice, and it is because I love and honour the memory of both Macready and Phelps, that I have here endeavoured to place the relations which existed between these two great men upon their rightful footing.

It was alleged that Macready had incurred a loss of upwards of £10,000 during his management for four seasons of the two national theatres.*

This amount represents, however, only the actual monetary loss. The additional loss in time, engagements, &c., could not be less than £20,000, so that in round numbers, Macready may be said to have lost £30,000 in his attempts to uphold the poetic drama.

This is not the time or place to enlarge upon the services rendered by that illustrious actor to the highest form of art or to the courage with which he dealt with certain abuses in the front of the house. Indeed I have nothing to add to Phelps' noble eulogy in a former chapter. It is sufficient for the purpose of the present narrative to state that Macready's

* He was more fortunate than I was. I succeeded in dropping £11,000 in five months during my luckless speculation at the Queen's Theatre.—J.C.

losses (doubtless much exaggerated) deterred others from attempting to succeed where he had failed.

Once, indeed, an enterprising Frenchman, M. Laurent, tried an experiment at Covent Garden, made memorable by the production of "Antigone" with Mendelssohn's music and the Vandenhoffs, father and daughter, as Cleon and Antigone, and by the first appearance in town of Mr. Henry Betty. After this the theatre was devoted to Italian opera until it was destroyed by fire one night during a bal masque given by "the Wizard of the North."

Mr. James Anderson made a gallant attempt to retrieve the fortunes of the poetic drama at Drury Lane, but the period was unpropitious, and the great national theatre ultimately fell into the hands, under most remarkable circumstances, of that remarkable man, the late E. T. Smith, whose audacity was as astonishing as his enterprise, and whose ignorance was more astounding than either. This gentleman was wise in his generation, and he always kept in view the great central idea of turning the splendid shilling, though it may be doubted if he ever succeeded in sticking to a single coin of that value through the whole of his busy and eventful life.

His proclivities never lay in the direction of the poetic drama. He tried it occasionally, but

as a rule he preferred to let it alone. He believed, however, in Pantomime, and the present important institution at Drury Lane owes much to his spirited initiative.

The Keeleys, for a time, had the Lyceum, which they devoted to burlesque extravaganza and to light pieces.

On his return from America, Macready occasionally put in an appearance with a scratch company at the Princess's, so did Mrs. Butler (Fanny Kemble), Edwin Forrest, and Miss Cushman. Helen Faucit occasionally appeared for a night or two here or there, but after Macready's retirement, either from lack of managerial prevision, or lack of enterprise there was no theatre at the West End devoted to the highest form of dramatic art. The "sacred fire" was only kept burning in the great provincial theatres or at Sadlers Wells, where for six whole years Phelps ruled with "sovereign sway and masterdom."

His ever increasing popularity now induced Charles Kean to enter the lists to contest for the palm, hence the Kean and Keeley management which commenced at the Princess's in 1850.

Much rot was written by blockheads who knew nothing about the subject to the effect that Kean had smothered Shakespere with upholtstery just

as the same parrot cry has been shrieked about in these later times in connection with certain productions at the Lyceum, the Queen's, the Princess's, and elsewhere.

Injurious and impertinent comparisons were continually instituted between Sadlers Wells and the Princess's, usually to the detriment of the former, utterly oblivious of the fact that one theatre was suburban, the other metropolitan, that one could run a piece for six months, while the other was used up in five or six weeks, that Kean could, and frequently did, take as much money in two nights as Phelps took in six.

The productions in both theatres were equally distinguished by artistic taste and excellence, although it must be admitted that in the majority of instances those at the Princess's were infinitely more splendid.

On the other hand, the industry and fecundity of the Sadlers Wells management left the Princess's far and away behind.

It absolutely takes one's breath away to recall the muster-roll of Phelps' triumphs.

There is no such monument of skill, taste, enterprise, research, and unremitting industry in the annals of *any* stage!

Of "the master's" works he did all except

"Richard II.," the historical Trilogy of "Henry VI.," "Troilus and Cressida," and "Titus Andronicus."

In addition to this series of unique and unrivalled achievements he revived, after centuries of neglect, Webster's "Duchess of Malfi," admirably arranged by the author of "Orion"; Beaumont and Fletcher's "King and no King," and other plays of the Elizabethans; he acted all Sheridan Knowles' plays; all Bulwer's; all Talfourd's; "Brutus" (Howard Payne); "Damon and Pythias" (Banim); "The Patrician's Daughter" (Marston); nearly all the comedies of Goldsmith, Sheridan, Colman, Reynolds, and Morton. Of original works, all James White's historical plays except "The King of the Commons" (in which Macready had already anticipated him). For John Savill, of Haystead, he paid Mr. White £400, a large sum for a suburban theatre; a larger sum, in point of fact, than Charles Reade received at this epoch for all his dramatic works during ten years!

He did Boker's noble drama, "Calaynos"; Lovell's adaptation of "Ingomar," and "Love's Sacrifice"; George Bennett's "Retribution"; Tom Taylor's "Fool's Revenge"; and I cannot recollect (since I am merely quoting from memory) how many others.

At our present rate of progress, here is work enough for every theatre in London for the next quarter of a century.

When the Phelps and Greenwood *régime* commenced I was too young to form a capable opinion, but as the years went on, and I began to know something of the subject, every new production was a new surprise, a new delight, and I realise now, more fully than ever, the debt of gratitude which I, and all the rising generation of that period, owe to that master mind.

Of all his great works I missed only three, "All's Well that Ends Well," "Love's Labour Lost," and the one of all others which he always assured me was his crowning triumph, "Pericles."

I have endeavoured to rectify this omission by adapting the subject myself, and some day, when—but I am anticipating!

As I have already stated, his limited resources, and the small area in which he moved, restricted him from the sumptuous embellishments and gorgeous splendour of previous and, indeed, of later revivals.

His staff of auxiliaries, even in his greatest works, rarely exceeded two score, but he contrived to multiply his resources by a process as ingenious as it was amusing.

In "Henry V.," in the march-past before Agincourt, the troops defiled behind a "set piece" which rose breast high. Madame Tussaud modelled eighty wax heads—these were fitted on "dummy" figures of wicker work, clad in the costume and armour of the period. Every man of the gallant forty carried two of these figures, one on either side, attached to a sort of frame-work, which was lashed to his waist; hence it seemed as if they were marching three abreast.

As they tramped past, banners streaming, drums beating, trumpets braying, the stage seemed crowded with soldiers, and the illusion was so perfect that the audience never once discovered the artifice.

The distinguishing characteristics of the Sadlers Wells productions were clearness and intellectual vigour—the plain, straightforward meaning of the text was put before you without any supercilious veneer of subtlety, the decoration was sufficient but not superfluous; above all, there was nothing amphigamous about the acting. In this respect Phelps was particularly fortunate, inasmuch as the closing of the great theatres enabled him to secure the services of an unrivalled troupe of experienced and admirable artists at small salaries.

He had a capable and industrious assistant stage

manager in Mr. "Pepper" Williams, while his partner, Greenwood (I should have said before that Mrs. Warner retired from the speculation two years after its inception), not only attended to the financial department, and took the weight of the production of the pantomime off his hands, but he also watched the waves of public opinion, and steered the ship in accordance therewith. Then he had the advantage of the sagacious advice of his friend Edward Leman Blanchard, who, it is now known, was the editor of "Phelps' Shakespere."

In addition to all these, he had the good fortune to number on his staff Mr. Frederick Fenton, a scene-painter of indefatigable industry, extraordinary inventive skill, and remarkable ability.

It is perhaps not going too far to state that the success of the various productions was as much indebted to this admirable and accomplished artist as to "the master" himself.

Certain it is that no work was ever entered upon without Mr. Fenton being called into council—and in some instances the arrangement of the text was adapted to the exigencies of the scenic arrangements—and indeed rendered imperative by the limited area in which the painter's magic pencil produced its marvellous illusions.

Despite these aids Phelps never could have got through his Heraclean labours had he not husbanded

his resources of body and mind; hence he only acted four nights a week, and his rehearsals, which commenced usually at ten, invariably terminated at two.

The restricting of his acting to four nights a week was Greenwood's suggestion, who saw that his partner was such a "glutton" at his work, that if permitted to have his own way, he would soon kill himself. From his long acquaintance with the locality, Greenwood knew that no attraction would at that period pull the Islington public into Sadlers Wells on Friday and Saturday (now the best nights in the week!); hence these two days, every week, were set apart for Phelps' holidays, and were usually devoted to fishing, his favourite amusement.

On these occasions the "bill orders" were issued, and no matter whatever the attraction, the receipts oscillated between twelve and twenty pounds a night, rarely lower than the one, and seldom, or ever, except on the occasion of a benefit, higher than the other.

I remember Greenwood telling me that on one particular Friday the rain came down so heavily that, of course, there was no fishing. Phelps sat very glum at home. Saturday, the rain fell heavier than before—the tragedian glummer than ever.

At night, with the actor's usual mania for the theatre, even when not acting, he took it into his

head to stroll round from Canonbury Square to the "Wells." To his astonishment he found the theatre crowded from pit to dome, with an enthusiastic audience of—"paper!"

The play was "The Wife." Mr. Henry Marston, a great local favourite, and an admirable actor, was the Julian St. Pierre, Mrs. Warner the Mariana. The performance went like smoke, and the applause was so great that Phelps feared the ramshackle old building was coming down about his ears.

Next morning he burst out abruptly to Greenwood with—

"Tom, I don't see why I shouldn't play on Friday and Saturday; I should double the receipts."

"All right, old man," said Greenwood, "try."

He did try the next Friday and Saturday, and the next, and the next after that. The astute Greenwood (sly old fox) cut short the supply of "paper," and when the receipts had dropped down to eight and ten pounds a night the tragedian growled—

"Tom, I think you're right. The weather's changed, so has my mind; henceforward I'll go fishing on Friday and Saturday."*

* "Away from the exercise of the art to which he so earnestly devoted himself, Mr. Phelps was simply to be regarded as a quiet country gentleman of reserved habits, fond of rural pursuits, addicted to the exercise of the gun and the fishing rod, and,

perhaps, prouder of his skill with both than of the warmest plaudits of an enthusiastic audience. During the theatrical vacation, he was to be found for many successive years at his favourite haunt, the Red Lion Hotel at Farningham, in Kent, where he stayed for weeks together to enjoy the pleasure of trout fishing in the river Darenth, which ran its meandering course in front of the gardens of the old hostelry. The farmers in the neighbourhood never suspected that a visitor who conversed with them so freely about their crops was at the same time busy in studying the best modes of rendering the next Shakesperian play to be revived at the temple of Thespis on the banks of the New River. And it is on record that a Kentish yeoman, bringing his family to town for the purpose of seeing 'The Doge of Venice' at Drury Lane, and recognizing a familiar voice and manner in the prominent actor, astonished the audience in the midst of the play by involuntarily exclaiming —

"'Blest if the "Dodge" isn't the old Farningham fisherman!'"

"Anon."—*Illustrated London News.*

CHAPTER V.

PHELPS AND KEAN.

RIVAL MANAGERS AND RIVAL TRAGEDIANS—STATE PERFORMANCES AT WINDSOR—MUNIFICENT HONORARIUMS—"JIMMY ROGERS'" CONTRIBUTION TO THE BOW STREET POOR-BOX—PERFORMANCES AT HER MAJESTY'S ON THE OCCASION OF THE MARRIAGE OF THE PRINCESS ROYAL—THE MONTAGUES AND THE CAPULETS—*Furore* AT SADLERS WELLS—PHELPS GOES TO BERLIN—EMIL DEVRIENT AND THE GERMAN ACTORS—THE WAR BREAKS OUT—NO PLACE LIKE HOME—KEAN'S RETIREMENT—PHELPS DISSOLVES PARTNERSHIP WITH GREENWOOD AND RETURNS TO THE WEST END.

ALTHOUGH there was no love lost between the rival managers, the competition between the Princess's and Sadlers Wells was conducted on fair and honourable grounds throughout; only one cause of feud arose, and in that neither of the belligerents was actually to blame.

Kean had been retained by Her Majesty the Queen and the Prince Consort to arrange a series of performances for the State Theatre at Windsor

Castle, and all the distinguished actors of the epoch were invited to assist. The emolument was small, but the honour was great, so were the fatigue and inconvenience.

The remuneration was fixed at a certain scale.

If a theatre was closed for the night, the management received a lump sum according to the size of the theatre, out of which the manager paid each member of the company double salary for the occasion, which frequently left the wretched impresario out of pocket by the transaction.

If, on the other hand, a single member of a company were required, he or she was paid at the following rate : £10 for leading lady or gentleman, £5 for seconds—such as principal old man, light and low comedian, heavy, &c.—and £3 for utility.

It will scarcely be accredited that even Macready himself was paid at this rate when commanded to play Brutus before the Court.

Upon one memorable occasion a certain company was ordered to give a performance at Windsor. Having to pay their people two nights' salary for the one night's performance, the management, to improve the occasion, gave a *matinée*, alleging that the theatre would be closed that night in consequence of the Royal command, &c.

They were undoubtedly within the exercise of

their right in paying their company seven nights' salary for the six nights and the *matinée*, but some of the company did not see matters from that point of view.

Foremost amongst the malcontents was the late "Jimmy Rogers," of facetious memory, who at that time received the munificent stipend of four pounds a week!

Poor Jimmy! He was five-and-twenty years before his time. Had he been living now, he would be getting sixty or eighty pounds at least.

To add to his mortification, one of the utilitarians of the company, on being called upon, the week previous, to act a small part to fill up a combination cast, had been paid £3 for his services. When Jimmy, therefore, received only thirteen and fourpence, he was riled beyond measure.

The play in which he acted was called (ominous title!) "Hush Money," but Jimmy would not be hushed.

Overcome by the honour of being permitted to display himself before so illustrious an audience, and possibly by something more potent, he resolved to present his liberal honorarium to the poor-box at Bow Street. Presenting himself the next morning, he opened fire thus —

"Please, your Worship, with your permission, I

wish to offer a small contribution to the poor-box."

THE MAGISTRATE—"Very good of you, I'm sure, Mr. Rogers. Kindly hand it over to the Clerk. The smallest contribution will be thankfully received. What's the amount?"

ROGERS—"Thirteen and fourpence, your Worship."

THE MAGISTRATE—"Dear me! That's a remarkable sum."

ROGERS—"Still more remarkable how I came by it. That Californian sum, your Worship, is the amount which I received for acting before Her Most Gracious Majesty, the Prince Consort, and the rest of the Royal Family at Windsor last night. As I should not like to take too much advantage of Her Majesty's munificence, kindly put it down as the joint contribution of Her Majesty and her loyal subject, Jimmy Rogers."

This *mauvaise plaisanterie* cost poor Jimmy his engagement, for the management immediately dismissed him; and he went forthwith to America, where he was nearly starved out, and was glad to get back as soon as he could.

Unfortunately, this untoward event evoked indignation in high quarters, and put an effectual stop

at once and for ever to the State theatricals at Windsor.

When the Princess Royal was married to the Crown Prince of Prussia, His Serene Highness wished to see some performances of the English drama.

To the intense mortification of the Keans, and to the astonishment of everybody else, the entire arrangements were relegated to my excellent good friend, the late Mr. John Mitchell, of Old Bond Street (popularly known as "Mr. Silky"), a genial, charming old gentleman, but scarcely the man to be put over the head of Charles Kean.

There can be no doubt that Kean felt himself insulted and grievously wronged in this business. He had, at great loss of time (the value of which these illustrious personages could not measure, if, indeed, it ever occurred to them to try!) and considerable loss of money, devoted himself to the nod and beck of his august patrons.

The only tangible acknowledgment he ever got for his services was a diamond ring, which was lost immediately after the presentation, and a reward offered for its recovery.

A wicked wag of the period (Albert Smith, I think), referring to the well-known feud between Macready and Kean, alleged, with delicate irony,

that the ring was found "sticking in Macready's gizzard!"

Poor Kean was destined to be still more deeply wounded in his most vulnerable part.

Seeing successful brewers, obscure foreign fiddlers, and popular painters knighted, he, too, fondly hoped that in requital of his services he would have had a handle added to his name—a delusion which this business put an end to at once and for ever.

Every manager in London, when called upon to act at Windsor, had to close his own theatre, frequently at an enormous loss, since the payment of a night's salary to the actor represents but a fraction of the managerial outlay. I believe Smith was the only manager who had the pluck to demur to this arrangement; in fact, he refused point blank to accede to it.

He, too, had a grievance.

He informed me that, on his first taking Drury Lane, he presented through the regular channel a respectful request for the Royal Box to be retained on the usual terms. He was informed by the official who represented the Court that his request could not be granted, because of the brief and uncertain tenure of his management.

After five years' probation, he made a second application, which was again refused; so when he

was commanded to send Charles Mathews to the Castle he replied that, "if the Court wanted to see Mathews, they could come to Drury Lane."

It was said this answer excited the greatest indignation in high quarters. One thing is quite certain; neither Her Majesty nor the Prince Consort ever darkened the doors of Drury Lane again.

To return to the performances at Her Majesty's; Mr. Mitchell requested Kean to assist in these performances, but he, very naturally, declined to serve where he had reigned.

In this emergency Phelps was appealed to. Although, under the circumstances, he could scarcely have refused, Kean's partisans and friends, especially amongst the gentlemen of the Press, resented his rival's coming to the rescue; and when the performance took place, Phelps was treated with but scant courtesy. On the night when he appeared at Her Majesty's as Macbeth, Kean appeared as Hamlet at the Princess's, and a great popular demonstration took place in token of sympathy with him.

On his return to the Wells, Phelps' partisans responded with a counter demonstration, and there was a furore for some weeks.

Shortly after this occurrence, I remember going into the pit on the night of Greenwood's benefit.

The play was the "Patrician's Daughter," and when Phelps declaimed with a volcanic burst of passion the burning lines —

> "I have taught
> *Convention* when it dares to tread on man,
> *Man* will arise in turn and tread it down,"

I was astonished to hear some fellow roar in stentorian tones —

"To h— with Kean and the Princess's! Three cheers for Phelps and merrie Islington!"

Phelps himself was so taken aback by this ingenuous burst of enthusiasm, that he positively so far forgot himself as to step forward out of the picture to bow his delighted acknowledgments, while the house rose at him, shouting and waving hats and handkerchiefs in a red-hot fever of enthusiasm.

Some time afterwards he went to Germany with his company, but, although it was alleged he made the visit at the instigation of the Crown Prince and Princess, the pecuniary result was *nil*.

He cherished, however, a grateful recollection of the genial warmth and the fervid congratulations of the German actors, "although," as he said, "they had a queer way of showing it."

One night at Berlin, after "King Lear," a crowd of them came rushing round, led by Emil Devrient,

who "went for him" furiously, and began to hug and slobber him, till they denuded him of his wig and beard, and nearly knocked him off his pins.

Possibly the campaign might have become a financial success had he stayed long enough, but just then another campaign commenced. The war broke out, and he deemed it prudent to return to England, bag and baggage, without beat of drum.

For nine years Phelps and Kean contended for supremacy. Unlike other civil wars, this noble contest was more for the good of the commonwealth than for the benefit of the combatants. At length, in 1859, Kean retired from the field, leaving his victorious rival monarch of all he surveyed.

The year after Kean's retirement, Greenwood and Phelps dissolved partnership, with, I fear, disastrous results for the latter.

In 1860, during the vacation at Sadlers Wells, he appeared at the Princess's, upon alternate nights, with Fechter, when a friendly intimacy sprung up between them, which led to important, though unsatisfactory, results.

From the time that Greenwood left the Wells, the business began to decline until Phelps himself deemed it prudent to retire.

On the night of November 6th, 1862, he took

leave of his faithful adherents, as Brutus in "Julius Cesar."

That night terminated for ever his career as a manager.

Did space permit, I could fill volumes with the record of his achievements at Sadlers Wells, but my publisher is inexorable and I am restricted to one volume.

Before we leave dear old Sadlers Wells, bear with me, gentle reader, while I quote my friend Tom Taylor's estimate of the master and his work. Here are the words :—

"When I look back on what I then saw" (October, 1857) "of Phelps' management, in action, the enormous labour of his rehearsals, the conscientious thoughtfulness of his acting, and his abandonment to the passion of his part, his devotion every day and all day long to the labours of his art, and the cares of his theatre, I feel I can understand better than those who knew his work only in its finished results, as it came before the public eye, what an enormous amount of Phelps' best life must have been put into the eighteen years of his management at Sadlers Wells.

"Knowing how much of mental as well as bodily strain those eighteen years of work must have cost him, I feel how wretchedly inadequate must have

been his reward, either in money made, reputation won, or credit and honour given, had it not been for the other and incalculably higher rewards derived from love of art, sense of duty fulfilled, and that consciousness of good work done which is all the sweeter, the harder are the conditions of the doing.

"I have not time or space here to say what I should like to say of the good work done by Phelps at Sadlers Wells. To my mind he stands out as one of the most potent and profitable among the unrecognised and unrewarded civilisers and educators of his time. . . .

"When the educating and refining influences of the stage as the great fuser and applier of all the arts, for working on masses as well as on units of mind, come to be more adequately appreciated than they are, the work done by Phelps at Sadlers Wells in continuation of that initiated by Macready at Covent Garden and Drury Lane, will have a chance of being fairly estimated."

Alas! Taylor was right. Phelps' reward was wretchedly inadequate!

He had anticipated Kean in management six years and survived him three.

The pecuniary results to both these distinguished men were deplorable.

Kean himself told me that his management had involved him in serious loss; but he was in independent circumstances, and could afford to lose.

Phelps was differently situated, and I had it from his own lips that, after eighteen years of unremitting toil, he quitted Sadlers Wells almost as poor as when he entered it, and he was approaching his sixtieth year when he had once more to commence his weary fight with fortune at the West End!

CHAPTER VI.

RETURN TO THE WEST.

NOW AND THEN: A CONTRAST AND A COMPARISON—PHELPS AND FECHTER—"THE DUKE'S MOTTO"—GEORGE VINING AND WALTER MONTGOMERY—"TWO STARS MOVE NOT IN ONE SPHERE"—HAMLET AND THE GHOST—PHELPS CONSIGNS FECHTER TO THE PLACE THE GHOST COMES FROM—RETURN TO DRURY LANE: MANFRED—TAKES THE TOWN BY STORM—BEGINNING AND END OF FECHTER'S CAREER AT THE LYCEUM—FRENCH AND ENGLISH TRAGEDIANS SMOKE THE PIPE OF PEACE AT CHARLES READE'S HOUSE—TWELVE YEARS AT DRURY LANE—THE QUEEN'S, PRINCESS'S, AND GAIETY.

"THEN and now," is easily said; but the contrast between then and now is simply amazing.

Phelps and Kean were not alone in the unfortunate results of their management, and it may be as well, before dismissing the subject, to examine the cause of "this effect defective."

To go back a little way: though Macready's salaries were low—rarely reaching in the case of any individual artist £20 a week, and seldom or

ever exceeding £30, yet if every theatre in London were at this present moment laid under contribution, the net result would not enable one to get together one company which for excellence and extent could compare with "Mac's" company at Covent Garden or Drury Lane.

Phelps himself has already quoted some of the casts. When it is remembered that besides the extraordinary combination of great actors before referred to there was in addition thereto an entire burlesque company, and an entire opera company far superior to any combination of this kind at present in existence, the conclusion may easily be arrived at that the expenses were very heavy.

As a matter of fact, the curtain never rose at Covent Garden or Drury Lane (even when there was nothing to pay for advertisements and the rent was reduced to a minimum of £3,000!) to less than an outlay of £300 a night!

Webster's attractions at the Haymarket—combining in one and the same season, night and night about, Macready, Helen Faucit, Warner, Warde, and Phelps, Charles Kean, Mrs. Kean, Mrs. Nisbett, Mrs. Glover, Mrs. Stirling, Priscilla Horton, Charles Mathews, and Madame Vestris, Tyrone Power, W. Farren, Bob Strickland, James Wallack, Webster and Celeste, and I don't know how many

others—involved a nightly expense of nearly £200. No wonder that rare old Ben barely escaped ruin by the skin of his teeth.

Buckstone for a long time upheld the traditions of the theatre. When the end came in bankruptcy, it was easy to say that he was old-fashioned and out of date. He had failed, and that was enough.

Mathews was not *old*-fashioned—nothing more modern-idea'd, either in acting or mounting, has been seen than "The Overland Route"—and when "Charley" was really past his acting days he was the fashionable craze at the Gaiety.

Sothern was not old-fashioned, and in "A Hero of Romance" and "Home" he was assisted by some of the most rising people amongst our present "shining lights"—*e.g.*, the Kendals, Ada Cavendish, &c.

The modern management *par excellence*—*i.e.*, the one which inaugurated the new departure in style, acting, costumes, pieces, &c.—was that of the Mathews', which was coeval with that of Phelps.

Amongst their most admired productions at the Lyceum were "The Game of Speculation," "The Day of Reckoning," "Only a Clod," "Cool as a Cucumber," "Box and Cox," and "A Chain of Events," that huge, cumbrous drama (adapted from

the French by George H. Lewes) which occupied the entire evening, and anticipated the sensations which have since made the fortunes of "The World," and a score of pieces of the same class. The stage management and mounting of this drama as nearly approached perfection as anything I have seen, but, the productions *par excellence* of this management, were those delightful, I may say classic, works of Planché, "The Good Woman in the Wood," "The King of the Peacocks," and "The Island of Jewels," in which, by the way, the first idea (the one which preceded E. T. Smith's memorable "leg of mutton") of the present transformation scene, was formulated by William Beverley.

One can scarcely realize that the net result of all this enterprise, skill, taste, and liberality should have been continual and unmitigated failure—yet so it was. Mathews himself told me that during the run of many of these justly admired works, supported by himself and his accomplished wife, Fred Robinson, Bucky, and Harley, Bob Roxby, Basil Baker, Suter, Belton, Rosiere, Clifford Cooper, Mr. and Mrs. Frank Matthews, Patty Oliver, Laura Keene, Julia St. George, &c., they frequently played to ten and twelve pounds a night!

The failure arose, doubtless, partly from the fact that public taste was not at that period sufficiently

educated to appreciate the lighter form of art—(alas! our fathers liked their amusements as they liked their underdone beef and heavy port, with a headache in it!)—but principally, I think, because there were no penny or halfpenny newspapers circulating daily and hourly in myriads, and advertising was in its infancy. Astley's, with its everlasting Battle of Waterloo, or the War in India, and Mazeppa; Wombwell's Menagerie; the Wizard of the North; and General Tom Thumb enjoyed the monopoly of monster posters, and pictures on the walls, and the tactics of the showman, as yet, had not been brought to bear upon the profession of a gentleman. Railway trains from the country were few and far between, and very expensive. Penny omnibuses, penny tramcars, and the metropolitan railways were not in existence; hence communication from the suburbs to the centre was practically restricted to carriages and cabs, and even these (considerations of expense apart) were not always attainable. In addition to this, the population of the metropolis itself was a fourth less than it is to-day.

The Bancrofts have realized, it is said, by the production of a dozen society plays, a princely fortune, and have retired to enjoy it, at a period of life long antecedent to that at which Phelps, after

devoting his best years to the public service, after having achieved a series of histrionic triumphs without parallel, after having taught generations of English-speaking men and women the meaning, the mystery, and the majesty of their great poets, was now about to recommence his weary fight with fortune.

The modest competence which he acquired after thirteen years more of prolonged toil, did not, I suspect, amount to half as much as Mr. Irving has gained by a recent trip to America, or the profits of Wilson Barrett on one season of "The Silver King," or, indeed, the profits of half a dozen other managers arising from a single piece; for example, the Bancrofts from "Caste;" Tom Thorne and David James from "Our Boys;" D'Oyley Carte and Co. from "Pinafore;" Edgar Bruce from "The Colonel;" Mr. Hawtrey from "The Private Secretary;" the Gatti's from "In the Ranks;" Charles Wyndham from "The Candidate;" or last, not least, Augustus Drury O'Lanus from "Human Nature."

Descending from the giants to the dwarfs, it is sad to record that immature and uncultivated actors of mediocre abilities—actors, quotha! creatures with narrow foreheads, "vacant of our glorious gains," well-dressed lay figures, wig-blocks, not fit to be

named in the same century with Phelps—obtain now-a-days higher salaries than he, the foremost actor of the age, received upon returning to the West-End "with all his blushing honours thick upon him."

Reference has been previously made to the intimacy between Fechter and Phelps. The former had now taken the Lyceum for a term of years.

Although he had distinguished himself highly by his performance of Hamlet at the Princess's, he had come a cropper in Othello, and was anxious to retrieve his reputation by appearing in other Shakesperian works, hence he sought to surround himself with the most distinguished English actors. Advances were made to Phelps, who appraised his services at the modest salary of fifty pounds a week, and actually consented to ultimately accept forty!

Among others, the ill-fated Walter Montgomery (who was then coming to the front in the great provincial centres) was engaged.

It was Fechter's intention to have opened with a Shakesperian play, in which the whole of the company might have appeared; but during a visit to Paris he saw Sardou's clever adaptation of Paul Feval's wild and improbable story "Le Bossen," was struck with it, and produced it for his opening piece on January 10th, 1863.

"The Duke's Motto" (so the English version by John Brougham was called) "struck ile" immediately, and was played to crowded houses for the entire season.

For a considerable period Phelps' name was conspicuously underlined in the Lyceum playbills.

Of course no manager could be expected to withdraw a piece which was filling his coffers nightly; the position was, nevertheless, so mortifying to the English tragedian's *amour propre*, and so injurious to his reputation, that he desired to be released from his engagement. Fechter was, however, master of the situation, and, as he paid Phelps' salary regularly, he held him to his bond.

Montgomery was similarly situated, and chafed at the chain which bound him.

The Frenchman had an unfortunate knack of scratching everybody the wrong way. No man made friends with greater ease, or lost them with greater facility. One of the first fruits of his uncertain temper was a row with George Vining, his stage-manager, who left him and went into management on his own account at the Princess's, where he became a most dangerous rival. Montgomery, impatient at being debarred an appearance, also threw up his engagement, and joined Vining, whereupon Fechter sought to obtain an injunction to

restrain the former from appearing elsewhere than at the Lyceum, when lo! and behold, it oozed out that the salary of Walter Montgomery, the most accomplished *jeune premier* of his time, amounted to the munificent sum of six pounds per week!

At present, the veriest tyro of a walking gentleman demands and obtains much better terms.

The relations between Fechter and Phelps now became somewhat strained, and things approached a climax during an interview in which the former, after intimating that the next production would be "Hamlet," blandly inquired what part Phelps would play in the piece.

"Why, Hamlet, of course," he replied.

"Oh! but I play Hamlet myself," responded the Frenchman.

"The d—l you do!" growled Phelps.

"Yes! So I thought, perhaps, you would play the Ghost!"

"You thought that I would play the Ghost to your Hamlet—yours! Well, d—n your impudence!"

With this the interview terminated, and Phelps' engagement terminated soon after, amidst a blaze of legal fireworks.

Apropos of this subject, Fechter's star, which arose in adventitious glory on the first night he ap-

peared as the noble Dane at the Princess's, in March, 1861, set in disaster on the last night of his management at the Lyceum in 1867.

I saw both the rising and the setting of this erratic planet, for I was present on both occasions.

Prosperity, which had turned his brain, parted company with him after his first season at the Lyceum, and the remainder of his term was marked by a dreary monotony of failure. Thinking it desirable to recall the memory of his former triumph, so as "to make a swan-like end fading in music," he decided to terminate his management with a revival of Hamlet. Alas! the fickle fashionable public had deserted their whilom idol, the glory had departed, and on the first night there was a wretched house, and an unsympathetic audience.

Fechter, who had feminine proclivities, and was as hysterical as a woman, was taken suddenly ill with an attack of the spleen, which caused the epigastrium to swell out into abnormal dimensions; hence he collapsed at the end of the second act, and Ryder, who had played the Ghost in the first act, had to come to life again to play the three last acts of "Hamlet." He played the part for three nights more, during which he roared himself so hoarse that after the third performance he was scarcely

audible; hence he too found it expedient to throw up the sponge.

It was the last week of the season, and he had taken the theatre for a short time to introduce a German-American actress, one Madame or Mademoiselle Vestvali; being this lady's manager, all the responsibilities of the enterprise rested on his shoulders, and he, therefore, found it necessary to preserve his strength in order to devote his energies to his fair client.

Subsequently he told me that in grateful acknowledgment of his services on this occasion, Fechter presented him (Ryder) with his Hamlet dress.

Some time afterwards, when they were at loggerheads, and Fechter was stigmatizing Ryder as a robber and a ruffian, and I don't know what else, I reminded the Frenchman of the above incident.

"Yes, my boy," rejoined he, with a triumphant grin, "I certainly did give the hook-nosed, herring-gutted villain my old Hamlet dress; but I gave it him because it would no longer fit me!"

It was in vain that Barnett—Fechter's acting-manager—urged Ryder to act for only another night.

"No," rejoined "honest Jack," in the vigorous vernacular of which he had always a copious supply on hand, "I've shouted myself hoarse; let the

purpureal Frenchman try a little shouting on his own hook."

Finding Ryder still obstinate, Fechter said to Barnett —

"Well, as this *voleur* will not act, and I cannot, you must go and get a Hamlet."

Away went Barnett to the agents to see if there were any Hamlets "knocking about."

On his return, after an hour or two's absence, Fechter eagerly inquired —

"Well, well, have you got one?"

"No," replied Barnett; "I've been to all the shops where the article is sold, but they haven't got any in stock."

Finding it impossible to provide a substitute, the theatre was closed on the Friday, and Fechter had to wind up the season himself on the following night, which he did with a very bad grace.

On this occasion I presented myself at the box-office for admittance, but Barnett persistently, though politely, alleged that I didn't want to see "Hamlet," and insisted on escorting me to the club opposite.

This opposition excited my curiosity, so, bidding him good-night, I went round to the gallery, deposited my modest shilling, and found myself one amongst a gallery audience of (ill-omened number) thirteen!

The other parts of the house were proportionately empty. Fechter walked through the part in a sullen, listless manner, the whole performance was melancholy and depressing in the extreme, and when at length the curtain descended in solemn silence, an Irishman who sat just before me roared out —

"Phelps for ever! Fechter be blanked!"

And thus ended the fascinating Frenchman's unfortunate management at the Lyceum.

Although I have related the circumstance elsewhere,* I think it is properly sequential to this narrative to mention that a year or two afterwards I induced Phelps and Fechter to meet at Charles Reade's house, in Naboth's Vineyard, to "bury the hatchet and smoke the pipe of peace."

When they met the old lion was grim and taciturn, and the young tiger nervous and embarrassed; but before the dinner was half over they thawed, and by the time they got to their cigars (which Reade, despite his detestation of tobacco, stood like a martyr) they were sworn friends.

Their experiences were rare and unique, and Reade drew them out with wonderful facility, for upon occasion he could be as good a listener as a talker. Altogether this was a delightful evening. When we broke up, Fechter confided to our host —

* In my Reminiscences of Charles Reade.

"Ah, Mistare Reade, he is a grand old man, and I loafe him like a brother; but, *entre nous*, he cannot play Hamlet."

On the other hand, as he got into his cab, Phelps growled —

"After all, John, he's not a bad fellow for—for a Frenchman; but, by —, he can't act Shakespere!"

Phelps' next step was toward Drury Lane, where, thanks to the enterprise and sagacity of Messrs. Falconer and Chatterton, he was secured for a term of years at the largest salary he had ever yet received.

On Saturday, October 14th, 1863, after an absence of twenty years, he reappeared at old Drury, making his bow as Manfred to an audience which crowded this magnificent edifice from dome to base, and which accorded him the most enthusiastic reception ever given to an English actor since the retirement of Macready.

Byron's mystic and undramatic poem was produced upon a scale of unparalleled splendour, which, combined with the popularity of the principal actor, assured a triumphant run up to Christmas.

On going round to offer my congratulations, at the end of this play on the first night, a poor, shabby-looking gentleman came and said some-

thing to Phelps in a low voice. They chatted together a little while until Phelps called me aside and said —

"John, let me introduce you to the original Manfred under Bunn's management of this very theatre."

Yes, it was indeed poor Denvil, who had once been the talk of the town, and who, after the run of Manfred, was for many years a highly prosperous London manager, and who had now subsided into the office of pit check-taker at the very theatre of which he had once been the popular idol! The irony of fate surely could go no further.

Phelps' engagement at Drury Lane extended over eleven or twelve years, during which he was the central figure of every work produced at the great national theatre.

When the dissolution of partnership occurred between Falconer and Chatterton, and the latter remained sole manager of old Drury, he thus announced the engagement of Phelps :—

"It is fortunate—so the manager must deem it—that he has by his side in this work Mr. Phelps, to whom, as an efficient continuator of his labours in the cause of the legitimate drama, have descended the staff and mantle of Mr. Macready, to whose

unremitting devotion, refined taste, and high aspirations the lovers of the poetical drama, as well as all who follow the stage as a profession, owe an immeasurable debt of gratitude, and on whose example and teaching the present manager of Drury Lane must ever look for his best inspiration and firmest support amidst all the doubts and difficulties of his anxious enterprise. That great tragedian thus spoke of Mr. Phelps, when addressing an assembly of friends and patrons on his retirement from the stage :—

"'Others will take up this uncompleted work, and if inquiry were set on foot for one best qualified to undertake the task, I should seek him in the theatre which, by eight years' labour, he has, from the most degraded condition, raised high in public estimation, not only as regards the intelligence and respectability of his audiences, but by the learned and tasteful spirit of his productions.'"

Besides creating ten or twelve original parts, Phelps repeatedly acted Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, Henry IV., Wolsey, Lear, Shylock, Falstaff, King John, Posthumus, Jacques, Brutus, Werner, Bertuccio, Richelieu, Sir Peter Teazle, Cantwell, Job Thornberry; and upon one occasion, he played, for his benefit, Jeremy Diddler, with a go, a verve, and a youthfulness of life and motion perfectly irre-

sistible. As was formerly said of Lewis's Young Rapid; in this performance, nothing stopped him, he leaped over chairs and tables as if he had been a boy of twenty; indeed, he seemed the incarnation of the vexed problem of perpetual motion.

It must be remembered that at the period of these Heraclean labours, of which the acting formed the lightest part, although oscillating 'twixt threescore years and threescore and ten, he walked to and fro the theatre for rehearsals, a distance of four miles daily.

After working together in harmony for twelve years, during which many successes were achieved, a difference unfortunately occurred between Phelps and Chatterton in 1871, in consequence of the latter having adopted the responsibility of Mr. Boucicault's cynical apothegm that "Shakespere spells ruin and Byron bankruptcy."

The difference became more pronounced when Phelps was driven from Drury Lane to make room for "Formosa," and found himself banished by Chatterton to Sadlers Wells, then "fallen from its high estate." The theatre was crowded nightly; more people were turned away than could get in; indeed, he was so potent an attraction, that upon one occasion when he was unable to appear

in consequence of temporary indisposition, his name alone attracted a house of over £100, yet notwithstanding, Phelps resented his banishment from old Drury as an indignity.

On the last night he addressed the audience, stating that "these crowded houses are the best answer to Boucicault's insolent and mendacious epigram—an epigram which is an impudent advertising trade gag—worthy of a quack at a country fair."

The divergence between Phelps and Chatterton now terminated in an open rupture, which unfortunately led to prolonged litigation and ended in smoke, both litigants having to pay their own costs.

In 1870 Phelps joined Mr. Labouchere at the Queen's Theatre for a grand spectacular production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," which proved highly successful, and realized large sums for both actor and manager.

In 1871 Phelps and Chatterton became reconciled. The latter was now not only manager of Drury Lane, but also, in conjunction with Mr. Benjamin Webster, manager of the Adelphi and the Princess's. "Amy Robsart" was attracting crowds to Drury Lane with poor Neilson; "Notre Dame" was equally attractive at the Adelphi: hence, Phelps

was engaged as the special attraction at the Princess's, where he played during the season Sir Pertinax, Falstaff in "The Merry Wives of Windsor," and Mephistopheles in Boucicault's adaptation of Michel Carrè's "Faust and Marguerite," returning, however, to Drury Lane at the beginning of the winter season of 1871 for the part of Isaac of York in the grand spectacular production of "Ivanhoe" (got by Halliday out of Scott).

He remained at Drury Lane until the beginning of November, when he returned to the Princess's to create the part of Dexter Sanderson in Watts Phillips' play, "On the Jury," which ran for a considerable period.

He continued at the Princess's for the following season (1872), and opened September 22nd in Othello. Creswick was the Iago. These "gay and sturdy evergreens" played a round of Shakesperean characters to great business, and only a month before Christmas (when the most successful theatres are generally carried on at a loss) the management were realizing a profit of £200 a week on Phelps' performance of Sir Pertinax MacSycophant, when, from over-work, he broke down, and the curtain had to descend in the middle of the play.

This was the last night he ever acted under the management of F. B. Chatterton.

After a period of rest and recuperation, he joined Mr. Hollingshead's company.

That his attraction remained unabated was evident from the fact that when he opened at the Gaiety the week before Christmas, 1873, a week during which every theatre in the kingdom is usually closed, a week during which it is usually believed that it is impossible to attract a full house, he played to more money than was ever taken in the building.

I quote Mr. Hollingshead's own words:—"He opened in Cantwell in 'The Hypocrite,' which he played for six nights *to the largest receipts ever known at the theatre*, and the following three nights were devoted to Colman's comedy of 'John Bull,' with Phelps as Job Thornberry, Toole as Dennis Bulgruddery, Charles Mathews as the Hon. Tom Shuffleton, Hermann Vezin as Peregrine, and Lionel Brough as Dan, supported by the general company. The receipts were equally great for these performances, and the orchestra was utilized for extra stalls.

"Phelps, unlike Charles Mathews, did not consider himself injured by appearing in this combination, and this short preliminary engagement was the forerunner of many others which were equally pleasant and profitable to both of us. As in Charles Mathews' case, there were no written

agreements between us, but we perfectly understood each other's views; and from December, 1873, to the day of Mr. Phelps' lamented death, he considered himself more or less engaged to me, and never thought of any public appearance without coming to consult me. At first I used his invaluable services at my Saturday matinées, and at these he played a number of his best comedy parts, intermixed with Cardinal Wolsey and Shylock.

"He avoided Sir Pertinax MacSycophant in 'The Man of the World' for nearly four years, and I never pressed him to play it. He told me he thought it was the most trying part in the whole range of the British drama, and when he felt physically equal to it he would let me know. The time came at last, after one of his long fishing holidays, and the result was a very fine performance of his great comic masterpiece.

"We produced 'The Merry Wives of Windsor' at Christmas, 1874, with scenery by Mr. Grieve, and original music by Mr. Arthur Sullivan. Mr. Phelps played Falstaff, and associated with him in the cast were Mr. Hermann Vezin, Mr. Arthur Cecil, Mr. Righton, Mr. J. G. Taylor, Mr. Belford (one of his old Sadlers Wells Company), Mr. Forbes Robertson, Miss Furtado, Miss Rose Leclercq, and Mrs. John Wood.

"Probably the most pleasant member of the com-

pany was Mr. Phelps. He had an amiable faculty of 'making himself at home.' When he first joined the regular Gaiety Company—a company not generally associated with the so-called 'legitimate drama'—he behaved as if he had been amongst them all his life; and with the company mentioned above—some of them specially engaged for 'The Merry Wives of Windsor'—he was soon on the very best of terms. Instead of sitting in state in his dressing-room, he passed much of his time in the green-room, and entered into all the little amusements of the place in the most pleasant manner. Fines were instituted to punish those who were found tripping in the text of Shakespere, and once or twice Mr. Phelps was caught (on evidence probably not very trustworthy), but he paid his fines cheerfully. The money was ultimately spent in a bowl of punch.

"One result of his Gaiety engagement was that he was induced to come a little out of his domestic retirement. I persuaded him to become a member of the Garrick Club, and Mr. Arthur Cecil persuaded him to take a Continental tour, as, with the exception of his visits to Berlin and Dresden, he had never been out of his own country.

"He was much impressed with Paris and Italy—with what he called the 'stage management' of

the brilliant city, and the beauty of the Alpine scenery.

"He played at the Gaiety during his various engagements, in addition to the parts previously mentioned, Sir Peter Teazle (repeatedly), Bottom the Weaver, Jacques, Lord Ogleby, Richelieu, &c. His mind was very active, and he was always ready to study a new part. At one time he thought of playing Bill Sykes, in a proposed version of 'Oliver Twist' by Mr. Andrew Halliday. If he had been ten or fifteen years younger he would probably have taken a West-End theatre, and repeated the experiment which he carried out so nobly at Sadlers Wells. He had no conservative prejudices against anything new, and the last time he was within the walls of a playhouse was at the Gaiety Theatre."

When Mr. Phelps first joined the Gaiety company he was very much prejudiced against the theatre and its surroundings, but afterwards he frequently assured me that he had never met with more consideration, and even deference anywhere; that Mr. Hollingshead always treated him with chivalrous kindness and courtesy, and that throughout their entire relations with each other he found "practical John" a man whose word was his bond.

My own views as to art and the functions of

management are as opposed as the Poles to those of Mr. Hollingshead; and I have never hesitated to say so; but it is a simple act of justice to record Phelps' opinion of one of the most enterprising, erratic, and liberal *entrepreneurs* of this generation.

At the expiration of his engagement at the Gaiety, Phelps went to fulfil a series of engagements in the country and elsewhere, with results to be stated in the concluding chapters.

CHAPTER VII.

HIS FIRST AND LAST ENGAGEMENT IN COTTONOPOLIS.

CHARLES CALVERT AND PHELPS—HIS LAST APPEARANCE IN JUSTICE SHALLOW, AND HIS FIRST APPEARANCE IN BARNWELL—AN IMPERFECT REHEARSAL—THE GAS GOES OUT: A BAD OMEN—STAGE FRIGHT—A MATURE AND MAJESTIC MILLWOOD—"OH! WHAT A FALL WAS THERE, MY COUNTRYMEN!"—CONDEMNED WITHOUT BENEFIT OF JURY, AND CAST THE SECOND DEMON IN THE PANTOMIME—BACK AGAIN LIKE A BAD SHILLING, BUT "A TIME WILL COME!"—AFTER HALF-A-CENTURY IT DOES COME!

AT the period when it had been officially promulgated in London that "Shakespere spelt ruin," two or three country managers (amongst whom was the present writer) arrived at a different conclusion.

Conspicuous amongst these benighted idiots was the late Charles Calvert, the good taste and splendour of whose numerous Shakesperean revivals equalled, if they did not excel, anything since seen in town or elsewhere. Although he thought 'no small beer' of himself, he regarded Phelps "as the foremost Shakes-

perean actor of the age," and had the most profound appreciation of all he had previously done for the poetic drama.

Moreover, being a shrewd and sagacious fellow, Calvert crowned the edifice of his own reputation by frequently engaging Phelps upon most liberal terms.

During his last visit he appeared in two of his greatest and most justly admired impersonations, the King, and Justice Shallow in the second part of "Henry IV."

I went over to see the performance on the last night, when he was received with extraordinary enthusiasm.

When we got home after supper I was referring to the unwonted warmth of the audience.

"And yet," said 'the master,' with a sigh, "I doubt whether there was any one person amongst that eager and excited crowd old enough to remember that the 'star' of to-night was the poor devil who, on his first appearance at the old Theatre Royal in Fountain Street, nearly half-a-century ago, was hooted off the stage!"

"You don't say so?"

"I do, though; it was during those trying times at Sheffield that I've so often told you of. Old Beverley was the manager, and I was engaged for

the juvenile business; I may as well admit now that I was raw as beef, and utterly unqualified for the post; but my ambition was insatiable, and my modesty as sublime as your own, John.

"It was about a fortnight before Christmas. The engagement reached me on Thursday. I was noticed for George Barnwell, and called for rehearsal on Saturday morning at eleven.

"I arrived here on Friday night, and secured one humble room at five bob a week.

"I was not a little proud, I can tell you, when I saw my name in the bills for the bold George de Barnwell; and I occupied myself by building all kinds of castles in the air—castles that before long were to be rudely shattered.

"When I reported myself to old Beverley on Saturday morning, he looked me through and through, till I thought I should have dropped beneath his cold and critical scrutiny.

"Of course I was perfect in the words, but I didn't know much about the business. The old fellow sat and watched me throughout the entire rehearsal in ominous silence. When it was over he shrugged his shoulders and walked away without uttering one word.

"I was always a dreadfully nervous subject, and this made me more nervous than ever.

"I went home to my lodgings, tried to eat the mutton chop my landlady had provided, but couldn't get down a morsel. After that, I'd a pull at the pipe, which made me feel rather sick.

"Then I prowled up and down the room for half an hour; after that I threw myself on the bed, where I tossed and tumbled about till at last I fell off into a fitful, feverish sleep, and dreamt all kinds of horrible dreams.

"At half-past four I was roused by the landlady, who brought me a dish of tea.

"The beastly stuff tasted like senna, and when I had nearly scalded my throat out in trying to swallow a mouthful, I bolted off to the theatre with the carpet-bag which contained my humble wardrobe.

"It was about a quarter to six when I got to the dressing-room, and the gas was not lighted; I had to wait a quarter of an hour in the darkness, so that by the time the lights were up I had worked myself into a fever.

"When I was dressed and 'made up,' I looked at myself in the glass, and arrived at the conclusion that I was such a guy the audience would be sure to yell at the very sight of me.

"I have always found that it is as bad to dress too much before the time as to be too much behind it.

"When the call-boy called the half-hour, I was

ready to go on the stage, but the curtain wouldn't rise till seven. I really thought that half-hour would stretch out to 'the crack of doom.'

"Presently the noble youth called 'the quarter,' then 'overture,' then 'beginners,' and down I went in a cold sweat.

"As soon as I got on the stage I encountered old Beverley, who vouchsafed no recognition to my 'good-evening,' but merely looked stonily at me as he passed by in silence.

"At last, with a sense of relief, I heard the end of the overture; the prompter called out, 'Take your places! clear the stage!' his hand was on the bell-pull to 'ring up,' when lo! out went every light in the theatre, leaving both stage and auditorium in total darkness!

"I am awfully superstitious, have been so all my life. To this day no earthly consideration would induce me to sit down with thirteen at table, or to start an enterprise or sign a cheque on a Friday. If I hadn't been superstitious and held a profound belief that I should ultimately attain a distinguished position on the stage, I should never, in the teeth of the numerous facers I received during my early trials, have continued the struggle.

"A gipsy told me my fortune once at Bridlington quay—she prophesied that I should get to the top of

the tree. I thoroughly believed her, and I think it was that belief which stimulated me to continue the fight. That was, however, long after this Manchester business, and at the time when the lights went out, I was struck of a heap. It was a sure omen of failure. I knew I was doomed. In fact, I was so convinced of it, that I became utterly demoralized, and I think if I could have sneaked out of the theatre unobserved, I should have bolted there and then.

"As it was pitch dark I knew not which way to turn, and as the preparations for the pantomime were going on, and the stage was open at the back, I might have found myself landed at the bottom of the cellar, which was thirty feet deep.

"Of the two evils I therefore chose the least, and remained where I was without moving, until, after ten minutes' delay, the lights went up and the play commenced.

"The contrast between the lady (a well-known tragedienne who had been highly popular in town), who played Millwood, and myself was unfortunate for us both.

"To begin with, she was 'more than common tall,' and, though still a gorgeous creature, she was no longer in her *première jeunesse*, while I looked even younger than I really was.

"She had the most magnificent neck and shoulders in the world, and evidently she knew it, for certainly she did not hide her light under a bushel.

"I should think she would easily have turned the scale at sixteen stone (avoirdupois), while I didn't run to ten, and was slim as a greyhound, so that we were anything but evenly balanced.

"I had distressed her very much by my stupidity at rehearsal, and she was predisposed to 'sit' on me. As she sailed on for her first scene she froze me by fixing her great fiery brown eyes on me and muttering in Siddonian tones —

"'Mind you speak out, young man. And above all, be sure to take up your cues!'

"I stood watching, trembling, and waiting in the prompt entrance for my cue.

"At length it was given, and on I went with my heart in my boots. As my ill-luck would have it, at the first step I took on the stage my foot caught in a hole in the green-baize; staggering forward with the impetus, I cannoned full against the mature and majestic Millwood: in the desperate attempt to preserve her perpendicular she caught hold of me; in my frantic efforts to extricate myself, I recoiled and fell upon my back, dragging her down with me!

"As we fell, she above and I below, there arose a yell of laughter, which shook the tumble-down old theatre from top to bottom, till I thought the very roof would have fallen and squashed the pair of us.

"The superincumbent sixteen stone (avoirdupois) had knocked every atom of breath out of my body, and for the moment I felt as if I had been flattened like a pancake.

"In this emergency the prompter came to the rescue and promptly rang down; then he and Lucy lifted the furious fair.

"When she had found her feet she glared at me like 'great Heré, with her angry eyes,' and if looks could kill, I must have been stricken dead then and there.

"As soon as she recovered her breath she 'let me have it hot.'

"Indeed, I caught it on both sides, for while on the one hand she hissed through her beautiful white teeth 'Cochon! brute! beast!', on the other her precious handmaiden, an impudent, buxom, red-headed young hussey, with a mouth like a cat, and a celestial nose, kept it up with 'Idiot! bungler! duffer!'

"Of course I could not blame poor Millwood, but I did not receive Lucy's compliments with perfect

equanimity. There was, however, little time for either apology or recrimination, for up went the curtain and as it did so I was greeted with a volley of ironical applause. Every word I uttered, every movement I made, was received with a yell.

"Finding the audience in this mood, the ladies followed suit. I suppose Millwood arrived at the conclusion that as I had made a butt of her, she would now make one of me; accordingly she proceeded to deliberately burlesque the scene.

"When she sarcastically inquired, 'What are your thoughts of love, my interesting young friend?' and I naïvely replied, 'If you mean the love of woman, madam, my youth and circumstances render such thoughts improper in me as yet,' the ingenuous admission (for which the author and not the unhappy actor is responsible) tickled my facetious friends in front, who positively howled with delight, and urged me to proceed with cries of 'Go it Milksop! Bravo Spooney!'

"Everything I said or did elicited a roar, and when at length Millwood and Lucy hustled me off the stage, the prompter said, blandly —

"'Allow me to congratulate you, sir, upon a new reading. I never saw so much got out of the scene before.'

"All this was highly encouraging. As the play

progressed I succeeded at intervals in making them hear me, and actually struck fire in the assassination of my uncle, for they wanted to encore that part of the performance! But the climax was reached when I was taken prisoner, and some ruffian in the gallery roared out 'Never mind the last act; hang him at once!'

"Never was a failure more complete, more ignominious, and, to be quite just (I can afford to say it now, though it was heart-breaking then), more deserved!

"None of the officials spoke to me, and not one of the actors even mentioned the subject. To tell you the truth I was grateful for their forbearance.

"Sunday was an awful day. I had no one to speak to, no one to confide in; and I couldn't have found it in my heart to write home to record the horrors of the preceding night.

"My second character, on Monday, was to be Lothair in 'Adelgitha'; so I forgot my misery, as well as I could, in studying my part.

"On Monday morning, to my astonishment and consternation, I found fresh bills out, announcing 'Sweethearts and Wives' and 'The Happiest Day of my Life,' in both of which pieces my name was conspicuous by its absence.

"I rushed immediately to the theatre, and walked

straight into the green-room to inspect the week's business.

"My name was withdrawn from every piece except the opening of the Pantomime, in which I found myself cast for the second demon!

"Happily, it being half an hour prior to the commencement of the rehearsal, no one was present to witness my grief and humiliation as I slunk back unnoticed to my lodgings.

"I had only one idea now, to get home as soon as possible. I hadn't a cent left, and there was nothing for it but to tell my landlady how I was situated, and to leave my traps behind as security for what I owed.

"She was a good soul, and wouldn't hear of anything of the kind. 'Pay me when you can, my lad,' said she; 'and as for starting to walk to Sheffield on an empty belly, that's rubbish. You must have summat to eat.'

"In half-an-hour's time she put before me a splendid rump-steak and a pint of beer; and thus armed for my journey, I slung my carpet bag over my shoulder and started for Sheffield, where I arrived, weary and foot-sore, at about midnight.

"My wife was as superstitious as I was, and believed in presentiments. It is idle to reason about these things, but she had got a presentiment

that I should come home that night, and she was up expecting me with a bright fire and a nice little hot supper on the hob, and oh ! such a welcome. When I told her all that had happened, she cheered me up, and said, 'Never mind, dear. The time will come.'

"And so you see, my boy, it has come; though I must confess it was a plaguy long time coming!"

CHAPTER VIII.

HIS LAST ENGAGEMENT.

At the Queen's Theatre—The Lion of Lancaster—His Speech at the Lord Mayor's Banquet—The Moral of it—The People's Theatre—A School of Art and a Conservator of Language—Analogue to the House of Molière—Picture of Phelps—Estimate of his Ability as an Actor and of his Character as a Man.

His last regular engagement commenced shortly afterwards with me at the Queen's Theatre.

The history of that ill-starred enterprise I reserve for another time and place; all I shall say here is that he joined me when Salvini failed and left me in the lurch; that it was my pride and my pleasure to pay the great English actor the highest salary he had ever received; and that, in order to give *éclat* to my *début* in town, he did me the honour to play my father in the scene from the second part of "Henry IV.," which, at his suggestion, I had taken

the liberty to incorporate with my adaptation of "Henry V."

Those who were present on the first night of that memorable production can scarcely have forgotten the roar which arose, which came back again, and yet again, until the whole audience burst forth into one mighty acclamation, when the curtains revealed to view the war-worn lion of Lancaster, lying beneath the shadow of death in the Jerusalem chamber.

It was a scene and an occasion to be remembered, the more so, inasmuch as for some time previous persistent attempts had been made by certain unfledged anonymunculæ to ignore his past achievements, and to underrate his splendid abilities.

It is satisfactory to be enabled to relate that this "grand old man" always remained in total ignorance of these small impertinences, and that the great, generous, large-hearted English public remained faithful to its old favourite to the last.

It is to be regretted that even sundry members of his own profession helped to swell the chorus of his detractors. Some of his friends, myself among the number, were disposed to resent these indignities.

In "the palmy days" at the Haymarket certain members of the company, excellent good fellows in

all other respects, were accustomed to regard all actors out of their charmed circle as "beyond the pale."

Their motto was, "We of the Theatre Royal, Haymarket, first, the rest nowhere."

During my flying visits to town I usually put in an appearance at Suffolk Street, in "Bucky's" room, the green-room, and generally wound up with a call upon "Old Chip" at the "Court."

On one occasion after the veteran had given me a cheery welcome, he inquired —

"Well, John, you're late to-night; where have you been, sir?"

"To the Princess's."

"Princess's! Where's that?"

"In a place called Oxford Street."

"What's going on there?"

"Phelps is playing Sir Pertinax MacSycophant."

"Sir Pertinax? Ah! I've seen George Frederick Cooke in the part; but Phelps! Phelps! I've heard of that man, but I never saw him."

This was a little more than I could swallow, so, oblivious of the fact that I was 'old Chip's' guest, with more temper than taste I rejoined —

"That's a pity, for if you had seen him you might have picked up a wrinkle or two for Sir Peter Teazle."

Although he had provoked this reply, the old gentleman evidently did not relish it, and an awkward silence ensued for a moment or two, when the cudgels were taken up by some of the younger bloods.

One gentleman, now in a distinguished position, referring to Mr. Phelps' well-known peculiarity of thrusting his right hand into the breast of his dress, enquired —

"Did you see him when the play was over?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Did you ascertain whether he has succeeded in finding that unfortunate flea he has been hunting up for the past half century?"

"No, I didn't," I responded, "but the next time I see him I'll enquire, and I'll suggest that while he is in the pursuit of his entomological studies, instead of catching one flea it might be desirable to capture half-a-dozen."

"Good gracious!" innocently inquired my interlocutor. "Why, what would he do with 'em?"

"Put them up to raffle for the good of you and your friends, so that those who succeed in winning one of the fleas might have a chance of catching a scintillation of his ability."

With that 'countercheck quarrelsome' the dis-

cussion ended, and my airy young friends concluded to "let that flea stick by the wa'" for the future.

It will be remembered that in the induction reference was made to the circumstance of Phelps "bolting," when his health was about to be proposed at the Macready farewell dinner. I had often rallied him on this subject, but the truth was, besides being a martyr to *mauvaise honte*, he had a morbid horror of even appearing to exploit himself, and he positively loathed the "showman's" art. Apart from all this, he was so petted and spoiled and coddled at home, that society had few charms and no attractions for him. Now it happened that during my tenure of the Queen's the Lord Mayor (Cotton) gave a banquet at the Mansion House to the representatives of art and literature, on October 24th, 1876, and Phelps and I were amongst the invited guests.

At first he positively declined to accept the invitation, and it was only when I urged upon him that the position he occupied involved duties and responsibilities beyond its mere barren honours, that he at length yielded to my persuasions and consented to accompany me.

On this occasion his health was proposed by the Lord Mayor in connection with the Shakesperian

drama. His reply was of so remarkable a character that I transcribe it here in full:—

"I can say very little to you about the Shakesperian drama beyond what I daresay the greater portion of you already know. But my object in speaking to you to-night is for a very different purpose.

"The Lord Mayor has spoken much of the educational power of the drama. You will forgive me if I speak of myself more than good taste would suggest. If I do so, it is only as exemplifying what is to come after.

"Some years ago I took an obscure theatre in the north of London called Sadlers Wells, and nearly the whole of my brethren in the profession, and many out of it, said it would not last a fortnight. It lasted eighteen years, and my stock-in-trade chiefly consisted of the plays of Shakespere. Now I determined to act, if possible, the whole of Shakespere's plays. I acted thirty-one of all sorts, 'from aged Lear to youthful Pericles,' and the thought begotten in my mind latterly was, that if that theatre could be made to pay, as I did make it pay, not making a fortune certainly, but bringing up a large family and paying my way—well, ladies and gentlemen, I thought if I could do that for eighteen years, why could it not be done again?

But, mark you, I found that about every five or six years I had fresh audiences, that plays would bear repeating again and again, and by a peculiar economic method of my own I was enabled to repeat them without any very great expense. Well, if that could be done by me as a humble individual, why could it not be done by the Government of this country? Why could not a subsidised theatre, upon a moderate scale of expense, be added to the late educational scheme, by which children are forced somehow or other into school?

"I maintain, from the experience of eighteen years, that the perpetual iteration of Shakespere's words, if nothing more, going on daily for so many months in the year, must and would produce a great effect upon the public mind. Moreover, I have at this moment in my possession hundreds of letters from men of all sorts and conditions who came to see me at Sadlers Wells as boys, and who have written to me as men to say that they received their first glimpse of education at that theatre. They have gone on improving in the world, doing this, and that, and the other which I cannot tell as I have not time, but I have those letters in my house in proof of what I say.

"If I could find any member of Parliament (which I fear is hopeless) I would willingly devote

what little of life remains to me, to point out the way in which this could be done, and I would willingly give evidence in the House of Commons to prove the truth of Shakespere's educating powers.

"I merely throw my bread upon the waters; it may float away and disappear for ever, but I throw out the hint in the earnest hope that it may gather strength and that it may come back after many days."

Nine years have elapsed since these memorable words were spoken. Alas! they fell upon deaf ears, and the bread which was cast upon the waters has not yet come back.

No member of Parliament has responded to the appeal, and the House of Commons still remains mute on this important subject.

The, so-called, National Theatre is devoted to big shows, marvels of spectacular splendour—but in the National Theatre the National drama finds no place.

Individual enterprise and managerial skill have done much, at the Lyceum and the Princess's, to preserve the traditions of the poetic drama; but these are fashionable and expensive theatres, and I fear our poets have to be buttered and highly

peppered to induce our upper ten to swallow the dose; but a people's theatre, at people's prices, prices within the reach of all, a theatre which, adequately subsidized, would correspond in England to the house of Molière in France, a theatre devoted to the national drama (by which I do not merely mean the drama of the dead !), where plays could be acted for a run of a week or a month or even two or three months, and then handed over to the repertory, so that in the fulness of time we might have consecutive performances of the historical plays of Shakespere, given as they are given at Berlin and elsewhere, this ought to be the theatre of the future.

The demand for such an institution is more imperative now than it ever was, inasmuch as the centralizing system has utterly destroyed the great provincial circuits, which were formerly training schools for the actor's art, an art which in its higher form of development not only threatens to become extinct, but which will most assuredly perish unless some such means as I have here ventured to indicate be taken for its preservation.

Surely a project of such national importance, not only from its satisfying an artistic want, but considered as a mere educational medium, to preserve at its highest standard of purity and perfection the language which Shakespere taught and Milton

wrote, is well worth the attention of advanced social reformers in the next educational scheme.

The hour has come, but where is the man? Where is the M.P? Alas! Echo answers "where?"

Perhaps when the Repeal of the Union is carried, the Land Question disposed of, the House of Lords abolished, the Church disestablished, the Eastern Question settled, and the Republic proclaimed, we shall begin to think about the necessity of providing a People's Theatre for the People.

The end of my task approaches—and here I propose to paint a crude yet faithful picture of the man and the actor.

Though straight and lithe of motion, Phelps had but a meagre figure. Its slenderness, however, became an advantage as he grew older, and his singularly abstemious habits, combined with his regular mode of living, enabled him to present to the last an elasticity of gait and a singular youthfulness of proportion quite exceptional in a man of threescore and ten.

Certain criticasters, legitimate descendants of the "common cry of curs" who ages ago yelped at great Cæsar's heels because his brow was bald, and who later carped at the wart upon the brow of the

mighty Oliver, whose representatives to-day measure Gladstone's genius by the dimensions of his shirt collar, maintained with "damnable iteration" that Phelps' demeanour was bourgeois, that his eyes were colourless and lacked lustre, that his features were common-place and inexpressive, yet even these small fry were compelled to admit that his brow was lofty and arched like the dome of a temple, the nasal column straight and strong, and that his mouth and chin were firm, powerful, and determined.

Though his hands were large-boned, gnarled, and even ugly, he made them eloquently expressive, and he had taught every muscle of his body to respond instinctively to the motion of his mind. His voice, which he assured me was originally a piping, weak, reed-like thing, had by constant application been trained into a potent resonant organ capable of expressing every varying mood of tragic or comic art.

That he was a mannerist his greatest admirers will never seek to deny.

It is remarkable that his mannerisms should have assimilated so closely to those of Macready, when it is remembered the two men never met till Phelps was thirty-four years of age, when one would have thought his style was fixed.

Where, however, a master spirit predominates,

the younger and more ductile mind naturally follows suit, and instinctively, perhaps unconsciously, reproduces the impression which is most vivid.

At Sadlers Wells all the young actors glided irresistibly into the Phelps mannerism, and at the Princess's, during the representation of that delightful and magnificent spectacle, "A Midsummer Night's Dream," although the Keans did not act in the play, yet when Helena and Hermia, Lysander and Demetrius were lost in the wood, and out of sight of the audience, during the changing scene, their various voices emitted from different sides of the stage such unconscious burlesque imitations of Mr. and Mrs. Kean's most marked peculiarities as to evoke roars of laughter through the entire house. It is unfortunate that on these occasions the scholar's zeal invariably induces him to reproduce the exaggerations and not the excellences of his master.

The most remarkable thing about the Phelps mannerism was the fact that it persistently asserted itself in his tragic assumptions, while in comedy he obliterated it so effectively as to efface his own personal identity.

For my own poor part the only drawback I ever experienced to my perfect enjoyment of his acting was his mannerism.

Discussing this peculiarity one day with a veteran

dramatist, he exclaimed, when speaking of a mutual friend —

"X— is too good an actor to be a great one! I admit he looks like a man, and speaks like a gentleman; so much the worse. He ought to growl, or grunt, or stutter, or have a French, or at least a provincial, accent; in fact, he ought to be a mannerist. No man has ever been a popular favourite in my time unless he was a pronounced mannerist. Charles Young was a mellifluous, mouthing mannerist; Charles Kemble was a silver-toned, sententious mannerist; Edmund Kean was a stuttering, spasmodic mannerist, then he got drunk, my boy, and people had the delicious excitement and uncertainty of doubt as to whether he was 'half seas over or wholly gone.' Macready and Phelps were always grim, and growling over their bones; Charles Kean had a chronic cold in his head; Lemaitre was always drunk or delirious (what could be more exciting than that?); Keeley was sleek and sleepy; Bucky was a chuckler, and always loose in the text; Compton was as funny as a funeral; Ben Webster was always imperfect, and had a Somersetshire dialect; Mathews was Mephisto in kid gloves and patent leather boots— and nothing but Mephisto (but you know the 'Prince of Darkness is a gentleman,' so was

Charley) ; Ryder was a roarer ; in fact, all these great actors owed their popularity to the fact of their being more or less pronounced mannerists. Ergo, your friend Phelps owed a great deal of his hold upon the public to the fact that he was a confirmed mannerist ! "

Mannerist or no mannerist, no actor has left so remarkable a record behind him as Samuel Phelps.

It is no hyperbole to say that the student who had the good fortune to follow him through his eighteen years' work at Sadlers Wells has mastered the entire range of our dramatic literature, or at least all that is worth mastering.

Many actors of our time have surpassed him in various parts, but none of them have ever acted so many parts so well. Although he fell short of the physical and intellectual ideal of some of the characters he essayed, yet he never played one single part on which he did not throw some light. If he failed here, he soared there, and everything he attempted was instinct with brains, life, motion, colour, vigour, and variety.

His Lear, Macbeth, Leontes, Henry IV., Shylock, Wolsey, Cassius, King John, Hubert, Master Walter, Louis XI., and Bertuccio were performances of the very highest order of excellence.

I did not subscribe to the appreciation generally

entertained of his Richelieu, while I always estimated his Othello at a much loftier standard than that at which it was popularly appraised.

His Malvolio, Justice Shallow, Bottom the Weaver, Cantwell, Old Dornton, Job Thornberry, and Sir Pertinax MacSycophant were beyond compare, the ripest, richest, most admirably finished, clearly articulated comedy impersonations of this epoch.

Although his Sir Peter Teazle lacked elegance and refinement, yet taken from his point of view (that of a crusty, uxorious, provincial baronet), since the elder Farren, no actor of these days, (with the single exception of Sidney Davis!) has ever approached him in the part. I well remember, on the occasion of Ben Webster's farewell benefit at Drury Lane, how Phelps' Sir Peter stood out and dominated over all the other characters, always excepting Miss Faucit's Lady Teazle.

It is said that when some one was speaking to the late Sidney Herbert about Mr. Gladstone's mind, the former replied, "Oh, never heed Gladstone's mind, it's his body which amazes me!"

In like manner it may be said that as mere efforts of physical strength, nothing so phenomenal has been seen in our time as Phelps' performance at sixty-five of Othello, Bertuccio, and Sir Pertinax. From the beginning of each play to the end, the

curtain was no sooner down than it was up again. Every one of these parts was played at fever heat, and in a rush of fire and flame which held his audience spell-bound.

Nature had done little for him, but art and application did so much, that notwithstanding his physical drawbacks, he became the foremost actor of his time; perhaps I shall not be far wide of the mark when I say that if his reputation be gauged by the nature, extent, and value of his work, he may be justly pronounced the most versatile and accomplished actor, and certainly the most indefatigable manager, the English stage has ever produced.

From the beginning to the end of his career, though he steadily pursued his own aggrandizement as an actor, he had the welfare and the dignity of his profession always at heart. He appraised it at the highest standard, and lived up to it.

His theatre and his home were alike sacred to him as the temple of a god!

His knowledge of men and things (though how he had leisure to acquire it heaven and himself only knew!) was varied and extensive, if not profound.

He had a strangely compounded dual nature. He was a strong hater, but a firm lover; a good friend, but a bad enemy. In the world he was rugged,

irascible, jealous, obstinate, and intolerant of opposition; at home he was genial, gracious, generous, and the soul of hospitality.

At home or abroad he was sincere, truthful and honorable—a fond father, a faithful husband, and a staunch friend.

It is deeply to be deplored that towards the end of his career he failed to realize that time, the inexorable, which in its onward course had so often lifted him far above the heads of his compeers, was now leaving him, high and dry, behind. Hence it was that, after he had actually passed his seventy-third year, he essayed, injudiciously, I fear, to act occasionally at the Gaiety, the Alexandra Palace, in Dublin, and at the Imperial Theatre.

Latterly, it was only too obvious that his acting days were over. Alas! when the glamour and the glory of the art he loved had faded from him, his life also began slowly, but surely, to fade away.

CHAPTER IX.

RECORD OF FORTY YEARS' WORK.

With Webster at the Haymarket—With Macready at Covent Garden and Drury Lane—With Warner and Greenwood at Sadlers Wells—With Augustus Harris, the Elder, at the Princess's—With Chatterton and Falconer at Old Drury—With Hollingshead at the Gaiety—With the Writer at the Queen's, and with Miss Lytton at the Imperial.

In order that the reader may realize the nature and extent of Phelps' labours, I have prepared a tabulated statement, without which this work would be incomplete.

Here and there I have interpolated notes upon certain matters of interest with which he was not immediately connected (but which, nevertheless, form part and parcel of the dramatic history of the epoch), especially the first appearances of distinguished people—remarkable combinations of eminent artists—and first nights of new plays.

Haymarket, 1837.

After encountering more vicissitudes of fortune, after having suffered more of the "ignoble pangs attendant upon impecuniosity" than any actor of the epoch, at the very period of life at which his successors (the Bancrofts) retired from management, Benjamin Webster commenced his managerial career at this theatre, over which he presided for many years with a skill, an enterprise, a liberality, an industry and fecundity which made his name the synonym for success.

His first season commenced June 12th, 1837, with Macready as Hamlet, Elton the Ghost, Miss Huddart as the Queen, and Miss Vincent, afterwards so well known as the heroine of domestic drama at the Victoria, as Ophelia.

In addition to these artists the company comprised Mesdames Nisbett, Vandenhoff, Alison (Mrs. Seymour), Waylett, Fitzwilliam, Humby, W. Clifford, Tayleure, E. Phillips, E. Honner, Wrighten, Gallot, and E. Taylor; Messrs. Buckstone, Strickland, John Webster, T. J. Mathews, F. Vining, Daly, Hunt, Charles Selby, Worrell, Ross, Bishop, Gough, and Gallott.

Madame Vestris, Mrs. Honey, William Farren, Tyrone Power, Ranger, T. P. Cooke, Dowton, and Charles Mathews also appeared during the season,

and on Monday, August 28th, Phelps made his first appearance, as will be seen by the following copy of his opening playbill:—

THEATRE ROYAL, HAYMARKET.

MR. PHELPS

(Of Provincial Celebrity) will make his First Appearance at this Theatre, in the character of Shylock, this evening.

MRS. WAYLETT

Is engaged, and will appear in "*West Country Wooing*,"

MR. W. FARREN

Will appear in the character of Uncle Foozle.

THIS EVENING, MONDAY, AUGUST 28th, 1837.

Will be performed the

"*Merchant of Venice.*"

Shylock . . . . . MR. PHELPS.

(His First Appearance in London.)

The Duke, Mr. Gough; Bassanio, Mr. J. Faucit Saville; Gratiano, Mr. Vining; Lorenzo, Mr. Collins; Salanio, Mr. Selby; Salarino, Mr. Worrell; Antonio, Mr. Haines; Launcelot, Mr. Webster; Old Gobbo, Mr. T. F. Mathews; Balthazar, Mr. Hunt; Tubal, Mr. Bishop; Portia, Miss Huddart; Nerissa, Miss E. Phillips; Jessica, Miss E. Taylor.

After which (First Time at this Theatre) the Musical Burletta of

"*West Country Wooing.*"

Eliza Fielding, Mrs. Waylett (her first appearance this season), who will introduce a Ballad composed expressly for her, "*When the Dew is On the Grass*," and her celebrated Irish Ballad,

"*Kate Kearney.*"

To which will be added the Comedy in two Acts (by Charles Mathews), entitled

"*My Wife's Mother.*"

Uncle Foozle, Mr. W. Farren; Budd, Mr. Vining; Waverley, Mr. Selby; Thomas, T. F. Mathews; Mrs. Quickfidget, Mrs. Glover; Mrs. FitzOsborne, Miss E. Phillips; Cook, Mrs. Gallot; Mrs. Budd, Mrs. Nisbett.

To conclude with the Farce of
"*Make Your Wills.*"
Ireton, Mr. Strickland; Septimus Plotter, Selby; Process, T. F. Mathews; Joseph Bragg, Buckstone; Clara, Miss Wrighten; Mrs. Foresight, W. Clifford.

First Price: Boxes, 5s. Pit, 3s. Gallery, 2s. Upper Gallery, 1s. Second Price at Nine o'clock: Boxes, 3s. Pit, 2s. Gallery, 1s. Upper Gallery, 6d.

MR. POWER

Will repeat the characters of Sir Patrick O'Plenipo in "*The Irish Ambassador*," and Pat. Rooney in "*The Omnibus*," to-morrow, being the last night but one of his engagement.

Phelps' engagement here extended only over six weeks, during which he appeared: August 30th, as Shylock; Sept. 1st, Sir Edward Mortimer; Sept. 8th, Hamlet; Sept. 11th, Mortimer; Sept. 14th, Othello, Iago Elton. (Phelps did not act for a fortnight.) Sept. 29th, Othello; October 2nd, Richard III.; October 4th, Mortimer; October 7th (his last night), Richard III.

It may be here mentioned as noteworthy that on October 9th "The Love Chase" was produced for the first time, and ran 84 consecutive nights—an event almost unparalleled at that period. Notwithstanding this great success, the management did not disdain to back up the *pièce de résistance* with Tyrone Power on the one hand, and with T. P. Cooke on the other, at half-price, in "Black-Eyed Susan," "The Pilot," and "My Poll, My Partner Joe."

Through the iniquitous Patent Laws, the season was compelled to terminate January 15th, 1838, but the Lord Chamberlain graciously permitted the theatre to open for an additional night (January 16th) for the benefit of Mr. Kenneth, the famous theatrical agent, of Bow Street.

Covent Garden Season—1837-8.

To give anything like an adequate account of the artistic triumphs and magnificent achievements of Macready and the unrivalled band of artists who served under his banner, would take me far beyond the scope of this work, and, indeed, the briefest account would fill volumes. I am restricted, therefore, to the following summary :—

The season commenced Saturday, September 30th, 1837, with an address by Macready, after which the National Anthem was sung by Messrs. Wilson, Manvers, Leffler, Stretton, and Ransford; Mesdames Sherriff, P. Horton, Vincent, Land, East, and the rest of the Company.

The opening play was "The Winter's Tale" (Leontes, Macready; Florizel, James Anderson;—his first appearance in London—Hermione, Helen Faucit) : the farce was "A Roland for an Oliver."

Besides the vocalists already named—constituting a complete English Opera Company, competent for

the representation of such works as "Fra Diavolo," "Der Freischutz," "Sonnambula," &c.(which, by the way, were frequently given as after-pieces!)—the company comprised Macready, Warde, Anderson, Elton, Pritchard, Yarnold, George Bennett, W. H. Payne, Roberts, Harris, Bender, C. J. Smith, Diddear, Waldron, Tilbury, Drinkwater Meadows, Bartley, W. J. Hammond, H. Phillips, W. Farren, Webster, Vining, Macarthy, Serle, Phelps, &c.; Mesdames Helen Faucit, Huddart, W. Clifford, Glover, Humby, Taylor, Phillips, Garrick, and others.

Phelps' engagement commenced the night after he closed at the Haymarket, but he did not open till three weeks later, as will be seen by the following playbill:—

THEATRE ROYAL, COVENT GARDEN.
This Evening, FRIDAY. OCTOBER 27th, 1837.
Will be performed Otway's Tragedy of
"*Venice Preserved.*"
The Duke of Venice, Mr. Tilbury; Priuli, Waldron;
Bedamar, Diddear.
Jaffier . . . . . Mr. PHELPS.
(His first appearance at this Theatre.)
Pierre . . . . . MACREADY.
Renault, G. Bennett; Spinosa, Pritchard; Elliott, Roberts;
and Belvidera, Helen Faucit.
During the evening the Band will perform Beethoven's Overture to "Egmont," and Rossini's Overture to "The Mount of Olives."
After which the Musical Entertainment of
"*No Song, No Supper.*"
Frederick, Manders; Robin, Bartley; Endless, Meadows; Cross,

Leffler; William, Ransford; Thomas, Yarnold; Margaretta, Miss Shireff; Louisa, Land; Dorothy, P. Horton; Nelly, Mrs. Garrick.

To conclude with the last new Farce (in one act) of

"The Spitfire!"

Messieurs Bartley, Drinkwater Meadows, Miss P. Horton, Mrs. Garrick, &c.

Doors to be opened at Half-past Six, and the Performance to commence at Seven o'clock.

Boxes, 5s. Second Price, 2s. 6d. Pit, 2s. 6d. Second Price, 1s. 6d. Lower Gallery, 1s. 6d. Second Price, 1s. Upper Gallery, 1s. Second Price, 6d.

Second Price will be admitted at the end of the Third Act of the Tragedy.

The new Tragedy of "The Bridal," and the Opera of "Fra Diavolo," will be repeated every Wednesday until further notice.

Subsequent Events of the Season.

Oct 31st.—Othello, Phelps; Iago, Macready; Cassio, Anderson; Desdemona, Helen Faucit; Emilia, Miss Huddart.

Nov. 6th.—Macbeth, Macready; Macduff, Phelps; Lady Macbeth, Huddart. (N.B. Macbeth was repeated every Monday night till February.)

Nov. 9th.—Jaffier, Phelps; Pierre, Warde.

Nov. 21st.—"Rob Roy." Macgregor, Phelps.

Dec. 26th.—Boxing Night. "Jane Shore." Hastings, Macready; Dumont, Phelps; Gloster, Geo. Bennett; Jane, Helen Faucit; Alicia, Huddart; and pantomime, "Lady Godiva."

1838.

Feb. 15th—First night "Lady of Lyons." (produced anonymously, and presented gratuitously to Macready).

April 7th.—Macready's benefit, and last night before Easter, Byron's tragedy (never acted), "The Two Foscari."

April 30th.—"Romeo and Juliet." Romeo, Jas. Anderson; Juliet, Helen Faucit; and Friar Laurence, Macready.

May 4th.—Ion, Macready; Adrastus, Phelps; Clemanthe, Helen Faucit.

May 16th. — "Julius Cæsar." Brutus, Macready; Cassius, Phelps; Antony, Elton; Octavius, Anderson; and Portia, Helen Faucit.

May 19th. — Last night of "Lady of Lyons" (acted 30 times).

May 23rd.—Benefit of Sheridan Knowles, the play of "Woman's Wit" (also presented gratuitously to Macready, and acted 31 times); and "The Wife" (compressed into three acts). St. Pierre, Knowles.

Many operas were acted during the season, notably Rooke's "Amilie; or, The Love Test," which was played upwards of 50 nights at first and second price.

July 6th.—Last night of the season: "Woman's Wit; or Love's Disguises," and the Opera of "Fra Diavolo."

During the vacation Phelps went to the Lyceum with the Syncretics, and appeared in "Martinuzzi," &c. (see his Narrative), and Macready returned to the Haymarket, where he appeared as Kitely in Ben Jonson's comedy "Every Man in his Humour," as Thoas in Serjeant Talfourd's new play "The Athenian Captive," and as Melantius, in "The Bridal."

Phelps returned to Covent Garden next season, the opening of which was announced thus:—

MR. MACREADY begs most respectfully to announce that this Theatre will be Re-opened

On MONDAY, Sep. 24, 1838.

In entering upon this second, and to him most serious experiment, he will only say the same views with which he undertook the conduct of this Establishment last Season, will be followed up, and his more specific pledges will continue to be strictly fulfilled. No exertion will be spared in presenting the National Drama, whether as a branch of literature, or as a department of art, with every advantage. The revival of the Standard Plays of Shakes-

peare in the genuine text of the Poet will be persevered in with increased activity, and without regard to expense in attaining the utmost fidelity of historic illustration. New Pieces will be brought out in quick succession with the same attention to decoration, especially pieces of such a character as to depend mainly upon extrinsic attractions; and the system of abstaining from all exaggerated and delusive announcements in the play-bills will be rigidly adhered to.

The Company of the Season consists of Messrs. Anderson, Ayliffe, Bartley, G. Bennett, Bedford, Burnett, Bender, Collett, Diddear, Elton, Fraser, Harley, Howe, Leffler, Lee, Macready, Meadows, T. Mathews, Phelps, W. H. Payne, Roberts, Serle, Strickland, C. J. Smith, Tilbury, Vandenhoff, F. Vining, Warde, Waldron, Yarnold, &c. Mesdames W. Clifford, Charles, East, Helen Faucit, Fairbrother, Griffiths, Garrick, P. Horton, Humby, E. Phillips, Rainforth, Serle, Taylor, Vandenhoff, Warner, Wortley, &c.

Acting Manager, Mr. Serle. Musical Director, Mr. T. Cooke. Stage Director, Mr. Willmott.

Events of the Season, 1838-9.

Sept. 24th.—Coriolanus, Vandenhoff; Tullus Aufidius, Phelps; Volumnia, Mrs. Warner; Virgilia, Miss Vandenhoff.

Sept. 26th. — "Cymbeline." Posthumus, Phelps; Iachimo, Vandenhoff; Imogen, Helen Faucit.

Oct. 1st.—Macready's first appearance as Hamlet. Phelps did not act.

Oct. 4th.—Othello and Iago, Macready and Vandenhoff. (Hard on Phelps.)

Oct. 6th.—"Winter's Tale." Leontes, Vandenhoff; Hermione, H. Faucit.

Oct. 8th.—A curiosity. "Hamlet" and "The Marriage of Figaro!"

Oct. 13th.—Splendid revival of "Tempest." Prospero, Macready; Antonio, Phelps; Ferdinand, Anderson; Miranda, Helen Faucit; Ariel, P. Horton.

Oct. 29th.—Macbeth and Macduff, Macready and Phelps.

Nov. 2nd.—Another curiosity.

Cato, Vandenhoff; Porcius, Elton; Juba, Anderson; Syphax, Warde; and Marcus, Phelps; Marcia, Miss Vandenhoff.

Nov. 23rd.—Ion, Anderson; Adrastus, Vandenhoff; (hard for Phelps); and Clemanthe, H. Faucit.

Nov. 30th.—Werner, Macready; Ulric, Anderson; and Gabor, Vandenhoff.

Dec. 7th.—"Venice Preserved." Pierre, Vandenhoff; and Jaffier, Elton. (Cruel blow this to Phelps.)

Dec. 26th.—"Jane Shore." Gloster, Vandenhoff; Hastings, Macready; Dumont, Phelps; Jane, Helen Faucit.

1839.

Jan. 4th.—Rob Roy, Vandenhoff. (Again rough on Phelps.)

March 7th.—First night of "Richelieu." Joseph, Phelps. (Wretched part.)

March 18th.—Helen Faucit's Benefit and first appearance as Rosalind. Orlando, James Anderson; Jacques, Macready; Adam, Warde; and First Lord, Phelps!

April 1st.—"Richelieu" and "Lodoiska." Kera Khan, Phelps; Lodoiska, Mrs. Warner.

April 20th.—"The Secret Tribunal" (never acted). Ernest, Duke of Bavaria, Phelps.

April 27th.—Vandenhoff's Benefit. "Julius Cæsar." Brutus, Macready; Cassius, Phelps; Antony, Vandenhoff; and "The Mountaineers." Octavian, Vandenhoff.

May 6th.—Macready's Benefit. He appeared as Coriolanus; Aufidius, James Anderson; Phelps and Vandenhoff did not appear.

June 10th.—First night of grand spectacular production of Henry V., Macready; Chorus, Vandenhoff; Gower, Anderson; Charles D'Albret, Constable of France, Phelps. This great work was acted every night till the end of the season.

July 6th.—Last night of season and of Macready's management. "Henry V.," and "High Life Below Stairs."

After a vacation of six weeks during which

Phelps went to Exeter and distinguished himself in Joseph (see Narrative Chapter I., Part 2), he returned to the Haymarket, which opened with the following remarkable company:—

Mr. Macready, Mr. Charles Kean, Mr. Power, Mr. Phelps, Mr. Strickland, Mr. Buckstone, Mr. Wrench, Mr. Webster, Mr. O. Smith, Mr. Walter Lacy, Mr. Howe, Mr. Hemming, Mr. Perkins, Mr. Caulfield, Mr. Worrell, Mr. T. F. Mathews, Mr. Gallot, Mr. Gough, Mr. Santer, Mr. Clark, Mr. Bishop, Mr. Green, Miss Ellen Tree, Miss Helen Faucit, Mrs. Warner, Mrs. Glover, Mrs. W. Lacy (late Miss Taylor), Miss P. Horton, Mrs. W. Clifford, Mrs F. Matthews, &c. Acting Manager, Mr. F. Webster. Stage Director, Mr. Willmott. Musical Director, Mr. Reed. Leader, Mr. German Reed. The Scenic Department by Mr. Phillips, Mr. G. Morris, and Assistants.

The season commenced March 18th, with "The Love Chase," afterwards came Charles Kean for a few nights, to be presently succeeded by Macready and his contingent from Covent Garden, viz.: Phelps, Howe, Helen Faucit and Mrs. Warner, who made their first appearance August 19th.

Haymarket, 1839-40.

Aug. 19th.—Othello, Macready; Iago, Phelps; Lodovico, Howe (his first appearance at the house, with which he was afterwards associated for 35 years); Desdemona, Helen Faucit; Emilia, Warner (their first appearance); Cassio, John Cooper; and Roderigo, Walter Lacy.

Aug. 21st.—"Lady of Lyons." Claude, Macready; Pauline, Helen Faucit; Glavis, Webster; and Beauseant, Phelps. Power and Mrs. Fitzwilliam in the after-pieces.

Sept. 2nd. — Othello, Phelps; Iago, Macready.

Sept. 3rd.—"Twelfth Night." Viola, Ellen Tree (her first appearance); Malvolio, William Farren.

Sept. 5th.—"Ion." Ellen Tree in her original character of Ion; Adrastus, Cooper.

Sept. 13th.—"As You Like It." Rosalind, Ellen Tree; Celia, P. Horton; Buckstone, Touchstone; and Jacques, Phelps.

Sept. 30th. — "Merchant of Venice." New scenery, &c. Shylock, Macready (second time in London); Antonio, Phelps (hard to be compelled to play Antonio where he had made so great a mark as Shylock); and Portia, Helen Faucit. To conclude with "King O'Neil," in which Tyrone Power appeared as O'Neil and Phelps as Louis XV.

Oct. 3rd.—Ellen Tree's Benefit. "Hunchback." Julia, Ellen Tree; Walter, Phelps.

Oct. 15th.—Notable from its being the first night of the famous farce of "His Last Legs." O'Callaghan, Power.

Nov. 2.—First night of Bulwer's "Sea Captain." Norman, Macready; Onslow (a very bad part), Phelps; Violet, Helen Faucit; and Lady Arundel, Warner.

Nov. 30th.—"Sea Captain" and "Rivals" at half price. Sir Lucius, Power; Acres, Webster; Sir Anthony, Strickland; Jack Absolute, Walter Lacy; David, Buckstone; and Faulkland, Phelps; Mrs. Malaprop, Mrs. Glover; Lydia, Julia, and Lucy, Taylor, Warner, and P. Horton.

1840.

Jan. 15th.— Last night of season. Webster's Benefit and last night of "The Sea Captain," which, despite the ruffianly slaughtering it received from Thackeray in the "Yellow-plush Papers," ran triumphantly to crowded houses for 38 nights.

There were two extra nights this season—one devoted to Mrs. Glover's Benefit, with the never-failing "Love Chase."

Jan. 17th.—Last extra night (again devoted to the benefit of Kenneth, the theatrical agent).

"John Bull" was given, cast thus: Job Thornberry, Dowton; Dennis Bulgruddery, Power; Dan, Ben Webster; Tom Shuffleton, Walter Lacy; and Peregrine, Phelps. On this occasion Mrs. Stirling made her first appearance at this theatre as Angeline in the little piece of that name.

Drury Lane (1839-40)

Was opened under the management of W. J. Hammond, a comedian of great provincial celebrity, formerly manager of the Great Northern Circuit, and recently of the Strand, where he had obtained considerable popularity by his performance of Sam Weller, and by the burlesque of "Othello."

Elton was the leading man; Hackett, the American, *débuted* here as Falstaff. Dowton, Compton, and Vining were in the company. In the early part of the season Henry Marston made his first appearance in London as Benedick. Emmeline Montague (afterwards Mrs. Compton) also made her first appearance, by command of the Queen, Dec. 2nd, as Juliet. On this occasion the unfortunate "Romeo," Maddocks, made his first and last appearance.

The pantomime bore the charmingly significant title of "Harlequin Jack Shepherd; or, the Blossom of Tyburn Tree!"

Macready, Mrs. Warner, and Phelps joined the company the fifth week of the pantomime.

Jan. 20th.—Macbeth, Macready; Macduff, Phelps; and Lady Macbeth, Warner.

Jan. 22nd.—First night of the play of "Mary Stuart." Darnley, Phelps; Mary Stuart, Warner; and Ruthven, Macready.

This play was acted ten nights.

Feb. 10th.—The theatre was open free, in commemoration of the Queen's nuptials. "Wild Oats" and the pantomime were acted.

Feb. 27th.—Phelps played Rolla in "Pizarro."

Feb. 29th.—"The Ghost did not walk," and the theatre closed abruptly.

March 2nd.—The bill was headed with the following significant notice:—"The Public is respectfully informed that this theatre will *re*-open this evening under the direction of a committee of the performers. Mr. Macready has in the kindest manner (under the peculiar circumstances) given the aid of his valuable services for Four Nights, viz.: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday next, being the last nights of his performing here."

"Macbeth" and "Mary Stuart" were each acted for two nights.

March 9th.—Last night of Macready, Phelps, and Warner in "Mary Stuart," and last night of the season.

From Drury Lane Phelps returned to the Hay-

market with Macready, who was also accompanied by Helen Faucit, Mrs. Warner, Warde, and Howe.

Besides these great artists, the company comprised, in addition to the established favourites of the preceding season, Charles Kean, Tyrone Power, William Farren, James Wallack, O. Smith, David Rees (from Dublin), Maywood, Oxberry and Buckstone, Ellen Tree, Mrs. Glover, Mrs. Edwin Yarnold, and Mrs. Stirling.

Haymarket, Season 1840-41.

March 16th. — Hamlet, Macready; Claudius, Warde; Ghost, Phelps; Gertrude, Warner; Ophelia, P. Horton; with Tyrone Power in "The Irish Tutor."

April 1st.—"Richelieu." Louis, Ben Webster; De Mauprát, John Webster; De Beringhen, Walter Lacy; Huguet, O. Smith; and Julie, Mrs. Yarnold.

April 23rd. — First night of Talford's tragedy, "Glencoe." Halbert Macdonald, Macready; Vich Ian, Webster; Glenlyon, Phelps; and Helen Campbell, Helen Faucit.

May 30th. — First night of Charles Kean as Hamlet. Ghost, Phelps.

June 8th.—Rich. III., Charles Kean; King Henry, Phelps. (Rough upon Phelps to play second fiddle here, where he had entered with a flourish of drums and trumpets in these very parts.)

July 3rd.—Kean's Benefit. Macbeth, Kean; Macduff, Phelps.

Up to July 3rd Macready and Kean acted upon alternate nights. The great Shakesperian actor appeared only as Halbert and Claude Melnotte. The other appeared in the Shakesperian parts.

Aug. 1st.—Power's Benefit, and his last appearance in London. "The Jealous Wife." Oakley, Macready; O'Cutter, Power; Russett, Strickland;

Lord Trinket, Lacy; Sir Harry, Webster; Charles, John Webster; and Phelps, The Major; and Mrs. Oakley, Mrs. Glover. Power also appeared as The Irish Ambassador and The Irish Lion.

Aug. 15th.—Inchbald's comedy, "To Marry or not to Marry?" Sir Oswyn, Macready; Lavender, Phelps.

Sept. 15th.—"Road to Ruin." Old Dornton (first time), Phelps; Harry Dornton, James Wallack; Goldfinch, Wrench; Widow Glover, Sophia Stirling.

Sept. 26th.—First night of "Master Clarke;" play by Serle. Richard Cromwell (Lord Protector), Macready; General Distrowe, Phelps; and Dorothy Cromwell, Helen Faucit.

Sept. 29th. — Appearance of Maywood (mentioned in Phelps' "Narrative," Chap. III., Part 2) as Sir Pertinax, "Man of the World." Egerton, Phelps! (Let those who have seen him in Sir Pertinax give their fancy scope and try to realize him in the milksop Egerton). Lady Rodolpha Mrs. Stirling.

Oct. 14th.— Stranger, Macready; Steinfort, Phelps; and Mrs. Haller, Helen Faucit.

Oct. 19th. — Werner, Maccready; Ulric, James Wallack; and Gabor, Phelps.

Oct. 27th.—"In consequence of the severe domestic affliction of Mr. Macready, the production of Sir Edward Lytton Bulwer's comedy is necessarily deferred until Mr. Macready can resume his professional duties."

Nov. 28th.—Phelps appeared as Jacques to Helen Faucit's Rosalind.

Nov. 30th. — Othello, James Wallack; and Iago, Phelps.

Dec. 1.—"School for Scandal." Joseph, Phelps; Charles, Wallack; Lady Teazle, H. Faucit; Candour, Glover.

Dec. 8th.—First night of the comedy of "Money."

1841.

In consequence of the brilliant success of this work Phelps had now a holiday until the end of the season.

Jan. 15th.—Last night of the regular season. "Money." (Macready, Helen Faucit, Mrs. Glover, Webster, and entire company.) "The Children in

the Wood." James Wallack as Walter, and "The Ladies' Club," Mrs. Glover, &c.

The very next day the following announcement appeared :—

☞ "TO THE PUBLIC.

"Mr. Webster has the honour to announce that the Lord Chamberlain has been most *liberally pleased to grant a Special License* to this Theatre for Two Months, in addition to the regular season, which will commence" (grammar a little mixed, but it is immaterial how good is done!) "on Monday, Jan. 18, 1841, with 34th time, Sir Edward Lytton Bulwer's New Comedy of 'Money.'"

March 11th.—78th night of "Money." Helen Faucit's benefit. "The Hunchback" at half-price. Julia, Miss Faucit; Helen (her original character); Mrs. Walter Lacy; and Master Walter, Phelps.

March 13th.—80th and last night of "Money."

March 15th.—(Last Night of the Season.) Webster's Benefit. "The Rivals." Sir Anthony, Strickland; Jack, Wallack; Acres, Webster; David, Rees; and Faulkland, Phelps; Mrs. Malaprop, Mrs. Glover; Lydia, Fanny Stirling; and Julia, Helen Faucit; with "Speed the Plough." Farmer Ashfield, Ben Webster.

It was through the influence of Lytton Bulwer and Macready that the prolongation of the season was obtained.

From this time forth the Haymarket was kept open nearly all the year round; and three years

later, through the personal prestige of the great actor and the great author, the monopoly of the Patent Theatres was doomed by the New Theatres Act.

There was only a vacation of fifteen days after Webster's Benefit, during which the theatre was decorated, &c., and it re-opened March 30th.

Haymarket, 1841-2.

Announcements to this effect continued to be made at the head of the bills for a considerable period :—

"Mr. Power will have the honour of making his first appearance immediately after the arrival of the *President* steamship, intelligence of which is hourly expected."

Alas, poor Power! the intelligence never did come, and never will until "the sea gives up its dead."

On April 22nd Phelps made his first appearance this season as Old Dornton. He was treated with scant courtesy, for his name was not underlined, and it was not even indicated in the bill of the day that this was his first appearance. Celeste made her first appearance on this occasion in Bayle Bernard's drama, "St. Mary's Eve."

April 29th.—Morton's comedy, "Education." Count Villiers, Phelps ; Farmer Broadcast, Webster.

The cast included George Bennett, Oxberry, H. Wallack, Fanny Stirling, and P. Horton.

May 3rd.—Macready and Helen Faucit engaged for nine nights only. "Money," 81st time. Harry Wallack played Sharp, the lawyer (great actors were not above putting their shoulders to the wheel in those days!).

May 5th.—Werner, Macready; Ulric, James Wallack (his first appearance); and Gabor, Phelps.

May 16th.—Last night of Macready and of "Money."

May 17th.—First night of Charles Kean and Ellen Tree in Macbeth and Lady Macbeth; Macduff, Phelps.

May 18th.—"The Philosopher of Berlin." (Never acted). Frederick II., King of Prussia, Webster; Voltaire, Wallack; and Rudolph, Phelps.

May 28th.—The Stranger, The Keans; Countess, Fanny Stirling; Savoyard (with song), P. Horton; and Steinfort, Phelps.

June 17th.—"The Wife." Mariana, Helen Faucit; St. Pierre, James Wallack; and Ferrado Gonzaga, Phelps.

June 28th.—"Merchant of Venice." Shylock, Kean; Portia, Ellen Tree; and Antonio, Phelps.

July 3rd. — Re-engagement of Macready.

"Money." Only alteration was Lady Franklin by Fanny Stirling.

July 6th.—Werner, Macready, Wallack and Phelps. Evidently this was the last night of Phelps' engagement, for from this time forth he does not again appear in the bills, and George Bennett takes his parts until he, too, is superseded by Tom Stuart.

July 22nd.—Re-engagement of Charles Kean and Ellen Tree. "Romeo and Juliet." Upon alternate nights Macready appeared as Evelyn, Claude, Werner, William Tell, and Virginius.

The play-bills but too plainly indicate the falling off in the friendly relations between Macready and Webster, inasmuch as the former is frequently slighted in the announcements—sometimes his name is suppressed altogether—while Kean's is perpetually blazoned.

Nov. 1st.—Helen Faucit's Benefit. New play by Troughton, "Nina Sforza." Nina, Helen Faucit; Raphael Doria, James Wallack; and Ugonè Spinola, Macready. This play was acted eighteen nights.

Dec 7th.—Macready made his last appearance as Claude Melnotte.

Dec. 29.—Othello, Wallack and Helen Faucit; and Iago, Tom Stuart ("The Caged Lion!" from Liverpool, his first appearance.)

March 8th.—Last night. Webster's Benefit. Robert Bell's comedy, "Marriage" (30th time), Charles Mathew's "Patter v. Clatter," and Webster in "The Woman Hater."

I have been unable to ascertain how Phelps filled up his time after he left the Haymarket in July. I only know that he re-joined Macready for his final season at

DRURY LANE, 1840-41-2.

A German Opera Company preceded Macready, hence the late period at which he commenced.

Previous to the advent of this distinguished actor, no decent woman dare venture in the saloons of the theatre.

In his opening bill the following significant announcement occupied a conspicuous place:—

"The room for promenading will be protected from improper intrusion."

The company was nearly the same as at Covent Garden.

1841.

Dec. 27th.—Boxing Night. "Merchant of Venice" (spectacular production). Shylock, Macready; Bassanio, Anderson; Gratiano, Hudson (from Dublin); and Lorenzo, H. Holl (from Norwich); Antonio, Phelps; and Portia, Warner; with pantomime of "Duke Humphrey's Daughter."

Dec. 28th.—"Every One has His Fault." Lady Eleanor, Warner; Harmony, Macready; Ramble, Hudson; Irwin, Anderson; and Norland, Phelps.

Dec. 29th.—"Two Gentlemen of Verona." Julia, Fortescue; Valentine and Proteus, Macready and Anderson; Thurio and Launce, Compton and Keeley; and Duke of Milan, Phelps.

1842.

Jan. 12th.—"Gamester." Mr. and Mrs. Beverley, Macready and Warner; Jarvis, Elton; Lewson and Stukely, Anderson and Phelps.

Jan. 25th.—"A Point of Honour." Durimel, Anderson; St. Franc, Phelps.

Jan. 31st.—By command of His Majesty the King of Prussia. ("King Clicquot.") Doors open at 5.15. Commence at 6 with the "Merchant of Venice."

Feb. 5th.—"Acis and Galatea." Clarkson Stanfield's scenery. Acis, P. Horton; Galatea, Romer; and Polyphemus, Staudigl.

Feb 8th.—First night of "Prisoner of War," produced at half price after "Acis and Galatea." Captain Channel, Phelps (see Narrative, Chap. II., Part 2.)

Feb. 14th.—"Venice Preserved" and last night of pantomime. Belvidera, Helen Faucit (her first appearance this season); Elton; (who had superseded Phelps in Jaffier in 1838), Priuli! Jaffier, Anderson; and Pierre, Phelps (his first appearance in that character). See narrative, Chap. II.. Part 2.

Feb. 23rd.—First night of "Gisippus," by Gerald Griffin (author of "Collegians."). Gisippus, Macready; Fulvius, Anderson; and Sempronia H. Faucit.

March 28th.—Macbeth and Macduff, Macready and Phelps; Lady Macbeth, Warner.

April 20th.—First night of the play of "Plighted Troth." Sir Gabriel Grimwood, Macready; Raymond, Anderson; Maddalena, Helen Faucit; Barbara, Fanny Stirling; and Andrew Wormall, Phelps.

April 21st.—"Plighted Troth" was announced for repetition, but it was so signally damned the first night, that it was never acted again.

April 25th.—"Macbeth," with "Acis and Galatea." "Macbeth" was acted every Monday, "Acis and Galatea" three nights a week, and "The Prisoner of War" twice a week till the end of the season. "Gisippus" was acted over twelve nights.

May 17th. — Helen Faucit's Benefit. The Stranger, Macready; Mrs. Haller, Miss

Faucit; and Steinfort, Phelps; concluding with the opera of "La Sonnambula!"

May 19th.—The Keeleys' Benefit. "Provoked Husband." Lord and Lady Townley, Macready and Helen Faucit; Sir Francis, Compton; Squire Richard and Jenny, the Keeleys; Manly, Phelps. The new farce of "The Attic Story" (never acted), and "Acis and Galatea."

May 20th.—Macready's Benefit. "Marino Faliero." Angiolena, Helen Faucit; Faliero, Macready; Bertuccio Faliero, Hudson; Lioni, Anderson; and Israel Bertuccio, Phelps.

May 23rd.—Last night of the Season. Anderson's Benefit. Othello, Anderson; Iago, Macready; Desdemona, Helen Faucit; and Emilia, Warner. Concluding with "La Sonnambula!"

At the end of the season Phelps returned to the Haymarket for the production of Sheridan Knowles' new play, "The Rose of Arragon," which was produced June 4th, 1842.

Alasco, Charles Kean; Olivia, Mrs. Kean (late Ellen Tree); and Almagro, Phelps. This play was acted 25 nights (see Narrative, Chap. II., Part 2).

At the expiration of the Keans' engagement, Phelps acted Sir Giles Overreach twice to William Farren's Marrall.

August 15th.—Phelps' benefit and last night. Sir Edward Mortimer and the Duke Aranza. The beautiful Nisbett as Juliana.

From the Haymarket Phelps returned to Macready for his second and last season at

Drury Lane, 1842-3.

The opening performance, Saturday, October 1st, was "As You Like It," from the text, with the extraordinary cast described by Phelps (Chap. II., Part 2), and the last new farce of the "Attic Story."

The programme for the following week is of so interesting a character that I am tempted to quote it in its entirety.

"On Monday, Shakespere's Tragedy of
"*Hamlet, Prince of Denmark.*"
Hamlet, Macready; Ghost of Hamlet's Father, Phelps; Gertrude, Warner.
With Handel's Opera of
"*Acis and Galatea.*"
Acis, P. Horton; Galatea, Romer.
On Wednesday, Lord Byron's Historical Tragedy of
"*Marino Faliero*" (Doge of Venice).
Faliero, Macready; Lioni, Anderson; Angiolina, Helen Faucit.
After which (never acted) a new Vaudeville Comedy, in Two Acts (by Planché), called
"*The Follies of a Night.*"
The Duke de Chartres, Hudson; Doctor Druggendraft, Compton; Pierre Paillot, Charles Mathews (his first appearance at this Theatre); the Duchess de Chartres, Madame Vestris (her first appearance here these six years).
On Friday, Sheridan's Comedy of
"*The Rivals.*"
Sir Anthony Absolute, Lambert (his first appearance); Captain Absolute, Anderson; Faulkland, Phelps; Sir Lucius O'Trigger, Hudson; Acres, Keeley; David, Compton; Fag, Charles Mathews; Lydia Languish, Nisbett; Mrs. Malaprop, Mrs C. Jones; Julia Melville, Helen Faucit.
The Historical Tragedy of "King John," from the text of

Shakespeare, Dryden's Operatic Drama of "King Arthur," composed by Purcell, and a New Farce are in preparation. Murphy's Comedy of "The Way to Keep Him," and Congreve's Comedy of "Love for Love" (adapted for representation) will speedily be produced."

Oct. 18th.—"Road to Ruin." Old Dornton, Phelps.

Oct. 20th.—"Othello." Macready and Phelps, Helen Faucit and Warner. Roderigo, Chas. Mathews.

Oct. 24th.—Grand spectacular production of "King John," Macready; Faulconbridge, Anderson; Constance, Helen Faucit; and Hubert, Phelps.

Dec. 10th.—First night of "The Patrician's Daughter." Mabel, Helen Faucit; Lydia, Warner; Mordaunt, Macready; and Lynterne, Phelps.

Dec. 26th.—Boxing Night (according to custom). "Jane Shore," Helen Faucit; Alicia, Warner; Hastings, Macready; Dumont (first time), Anderson; and Gloster (first time), Phelps.

1843.

Jan. 19th.—"Lady of Lyons." Claude and Pauline, Macready and H. Faucit; and Damas (first time), Phelps.

Jan. 21st.—"Cymbeline." Imogen, Helen Faucit; Posthumus, Anderson; Iachimo, Macready; and Bellarius, Phelps! (An inexplicable change. It will be remembered that on the second night of the second season at Covent Garden he played Posthumus.)

Feb. 11th.—First night of "Blot in the Scutcheon." Announced without the author's name. Mildred, Helen Faucit; Gwendolin, Stirling; Merton, Anderson; and Thorold, Phelps. With (first time) "A Thumping Legacy" and the opera of "Der Freischütz!" (How is this for length? "Blot in the Scutcheon" was only acted three nights.)

Feb. 24th.—Macready's benefit. "Much Ado." Benedick and Beatrice, Macready and Nisbett; Dogberry and Verges, Compton and Keeley; and Leonato, Phelps. With 'Comus,' Macready; the Lady, Helen Faucit. Concluding with "A Thumping Legacy."

March 6th.—Virginius, Macready; Icilius and Virginia, Anderson and H. Faucit; and Dentatus, Phelps.

March 16th.—Othello, Anderson; Iago, Macready.

March 30th.—Othello and Iago, Anderson and Phelps.

April 21st.—Closed in consequence of the death of the Duke of Sussex.

April 24th.—First night of "The Secretary." (See Induction.) Laura, Helen Faucit; Colonel Green and Wilton Brown, Macready and Anderson; and Byerdale, Phelps.

May 1st.—Anderson's benefit. "Julius Cæsar." Lucius, Mrs. A. Wigan; Antony, Anderson; Brutus, Macready; and Cassius, Phelps.

May 6th.—Mrs. Nisbett's benefit. "School for Scandal." Joseph (for this night only), Macready; Trip, A. Wigan; Sir Peter and Lady Teazle, Compton and Nisbett.

May 16th.—Benefit of Sheridan Knowles. "Julius Cæsar." Casca, Knowles.

May 18th.—Helen Faucit's benefit. First night of "Athelwold." Elfrida, Helen Faucit; Athelwold, Macready; Edgar, Anderson; and Dunstan, Phelps.

May 29th.—Benefit for memorial to Mrs. Siddons. Fourth Act of "Henry IV." (Part II). The King, Macready; the Prince, Anderson; speechless Pages, Selby and Alfred Wigan; and Gascoyne, Phelps.

May 30th.—Phelps' benefit. "Winter's Tale," with an extraordinary cast. (See narrative, Chap. II., Part 2.) Concluding with "Fortunio."

June 12th.—The Queen commanded "As You Like It." Rosalind, Helen Faucit.

June 14th.—Last night of Macready's management: he appeared as Macbeth; Macduff, Phelps.

This was the only important character of which Phelps retained undisputed possession during all the time he was with Macready.

With this performance, terminated one of the most memorable managements of which we have any record. Neither Macready nor Phelps ever appeared at Drury Lane, or indeed, ever acted together again, until the night of Macready's fare-

well in 1851, when they both resumed the characters of Macbeth and Macduff.

As already stated (Narrative, Chap. III., Part 2), the Phelps and Warner management commenced at Sadlers Wells, May 27th, 1844. Phelps had closed at Drury Lane with "Macbeth," and he opened at Islington with the same play, assuming now the title *rôle*. Subjoined is a copy of the opening bill:—

"Mrs. Warner and Mr. Phelps have embarked in the management and performance of Sadlers Wells Theatre, in the hope of eventually rendering it what a theatre ought to be—a place for justly representing the works of our great dramatic poets. This undertaking is commenced at a time when the stages which have been exclusively called 'National' are closed, or devoted to very different objects from that of presenting the real DRAMA of England, and *when* the law has placed all theatres upon an equal footing of security and respectability, leaving no difference except in the object and conduct of the management.

"These circumstances justify the notion, that each separate division of our immense metropolis, with its 2,000,000 of inhabitants, may have its own well-conducted theatre within a reasonable distance of the homes of its patrons.

"For the north of London, they offer an entertainment selected from the first stock drama in the world, reinforced by such novelties as can be procured by diligence and liberality, intending that the quality of their novelties will constantly improve, as time will be given to procure and prepare them; and a COMPANY of acknowledged talent, playing such characters as they must be called upon to sustain at Drury Lane and Covent Garden, were those houses now devoted to the drama.

"These attractions are placed in a theatre where all can see and hear, at a price fairly within the habitual means of all.

"They commence under the disadvantage of very short preparation, and they are aware that some errors and deficiencies are inseparable from such a circumstance; they trust that their names are a sufficient guarantee for the honest endeavour to deserve further patronage, and they promise that the trust of the public, and its encouragement, shall be met by continual zeal and liberality, increasing constantly with the means of showing it. They will endeavour to confirm what may be found satisfactory, supply what may be at first deficient, and above all, exalt the entertainments to meet the good of the audience."

Stage Manager, Mr. Phelps—Treasurer, Mr. Warner—Acting Manager, Mr. T. L. Greenwood.

THEATRE ROYAL, SADLERS WELLS.

On Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, May 27th, 28th, and 29th, 1844. The performance will commence with Shakespere's play of

"*Macbeth,*"

With New Scenery, by Messrs. F. Fenton, Morelli, &c.

Duncan (King of Scotland), Mr. Williams.

Malcolm, Donalbain,	Sons to the King	Mr. Hield. Miss Thornbury.
Macbeth, Banquo, Macduff,	Generals of the King's Army	Mr. Phelps. Mr. T. H. Lacy. Mr. H. Marston.
Lenox, Rosse, Menteith, Angus, Cathness,	Noblemen of Scotland	Mr. Raymond. Mr. Aldridge. Mr. Gregory. Mr. Johnson. Mr. Stewart.

Fleance (Son to Banquo), Miss Francis. Physician, Mr. Franks.

Siward (General of the English Forces), Mr. Graham.

Seyton (an Officer attending on Macbeth), Mr. Knight.

Lady Macbeth, Mrs. Warner.

Gentlewoman (attending Lady Macbeth), Mrs. H. Marston.

Hecate, Mr. Clement White. First Witch, Mr. G. Forman.

Second Witch, Mr. Wilson. Third Witch, Mr. Morelli.

First Singing Witch, Miss Lebatt.
Second Singing Witch, Miss Emma Harding.
Other Singing Witches, Misses Pearce, Graham, Morelli, Martin, Oliver, and Jameson.

In the course of the Evening, An Address, written by T. J. Serle, Esq., will be delivered by Mrs. Warner.

The afterpieces were the Operetta of "*The Hunter's Bride*," and a new Farce by Mr. Greenwood, called "*A Row in the Buildings*," in which Mr. John Webster performed.

Boxes, 2s.; Pit, 1s.; Gallery, 6d.

Doors open at Six o'clock; commence at Half-past Six.

On Monday next will be acted, with new Scenery, &c., Shakespere's Tragedy of

"*Othello.*"

Othello . . . Mr. Phelps.
Iago . . . . . Mr. H. Marston
Cassio . . . Mr. J. Webster.
Roderigo, Mr. Hudson (of the T. R. Drury Lane, his first appearance here).
Brabantio . . . Mr. T. H. Lacy.
Desdemona, Miss F. Cooper (of the T. R. Covent Garden, her first appearance here).
Emilia . . . Mrs. Warner.

"Engagements have been formed with several of the most talented Members of the Profession, of whose first appearance due notice will be given. A new Drama is in a forward state of preparation. The principal characters will be supported by Mrs. Warner, Miss Cooper, of the Theatres Royal, Covent Garden, Drury Lane, and the Haymarket, and Mr. Phelps."

During his management of this theatre Mr. Phelps produced nearly every standard work in dramatic literature, besides performing the feat, never accomplished before or since, of acting all the plays of

Shakespere, except "Richard II.," the Trilogy of "Henry VI.," "Troilus and Cressida," and "Titus Andronicus."

After a reign of eighteen consecutive years, he took his farewell benefit, November 6th, 1862, when he enacted Brutus in "Julius Cæsar," Mr. Creswick was Cassius, and Edmund Phelps, Marc Antony.

During the vacation of 1861, Phelps acted with the late Mr. Augustus Harris at the Princess's, upon alternate nights with Fechter, appearing in Lear, Bertuccio, and Sir Pertinax. Here he received the largest salary he had ever yet earned, viz., £60 a week.

The pecuniary result of the engagement was not satisfactory to Harris, who proposed another arrangement for the following summer, during which "The Merry Wives of Windsor" was produced on a scale of great completeness. Phelps now shared with the management, dividing the gross receipts after the expenses, with the result that on many occasions his share amounted to £200 a week!

On Saturday, October 10th, 1863, after an absence of twenty years, he returned to Drury Lane, and made his re-entry as Manfred.

Thanks to the courtesy of my friend Chatterton (from whose lips I have taken down this statement),

I am enabled to present the following authentic record of Phelps' work at Drury Lane and the Princess's on his return to the West End.

Drury Lane opened October 14th, 1863, under the management of Falconer and Chatterton, with a grand spectacular production of Byron's phantasmal drama, "Manfred," and Phelps sustained the title *rôle.* This work was acted up to Dec. 14th, when he appeared as Sir Pertinax Mac Sycophant, for the benefit of F. B. Chatterton.

1864.—On Jan. 16th Phelps appeared as Julian de Vivaldi in Falconer's new drama, "Night and Morn," and on Easter Monday as Falstaff in a grand spectacular production of "Henry IV." (Part 1). King Henry IV., John Ryder; The Prince, Walter Lacy; Hotspur, Walter Montgomery; Owen Glendwyr, Alfred Rayner; Sir Richard Vernon, Edmund Phelps; Poins, Robert Roxby; Francis, George Belmore; Lady Percy, Rose Leclercq; Lady Gwendwyr (with song in the Welsh language), Edith Gwynne; and Dame Quickly, Mrs Edmund Falconer and Mrs. Henry Vandenhoff.

During the vacation, Phelps acted in Dublin, Edinboro', Glasgow, Birmingham, and Hull.

Season of 1864-5 commenced Sept. 22, when he re-opened as Falstaff, "Henry IV.," Part 1. After

a short run this was succeeded by Part 2 of "Henry IV.," in which Phelps "doubled" the part of the dying King, with Justice Shallow (one of his very best performances). Later on he acted Othello and Posthumus to the Imogen of Miss Helen Faucit.

October 20th.—Grand spectacular production of "Macbeth," which ran up to Christmas. Phelps and Helen Faucit, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth.

1865, Jan. 3rd.—Wolsey in "Henry VIII." During remainder of season, "Richelieu" and "Cymbeline."

The vacation was devoted to starring in principal cities.

Season of 1865-6.—Sept. 23. "Macbeth" revived, and spectacular production of "Comus."

Oct. 22.—Grand spectacular production of "King John." John, Phelps; Faulconbridge, James Anderson; Hubert, Tom Swinbourne; Arthur Percy, Roselle; and Constance, Miss Atkinson.

A fog so dense penetrated the house on the first night, that by the time the last act was reached the only objects discernible in the scene of Swinstead Abbey were the torches. Notwithstanding this inauspicious start, the piece ran till Christmas. During this season Phelps appeared as Cantwell, Job Thornberry, Mr. Oakley, Sir Peter Teazle, and Bertuccio. Starred as usual in the country during vacation.

Sept. 24th, 1866.—First night of season. "King John" revived. Phelps, Barry Sullivan, and Mrs. Hermann Vezin, John, Faulconbridge, and Constance; and "The Comedy of Errors" (the Brothers Webb).

"Macbeth" was next revived for several nights.

Oct. 20th.—Goethe's "Faust," adapted by Bayle Bernard. Grand spectacular production, with—first time on the English stage—"The Walpurgis Night." Music selected from Mendelssohn, Spohr, Lindpainter, and others. Arranged by Tully, and performed by an increased band and chorus of sixty performers. Scenery by Beverley. Costumes designed by R. W. Keene. Mephistopheles, Phelps; Faust, Edmund Phelps; Valentine, William Harrison; and Gretchen, by Mrs. Hermann Vezin. This elaborate and magnificent spectacle ran up to Christmas to great houses.

Miscellaneous performances till end of season, after which usual starring tour.

1867-8.—First night of season.—Sept. 23rd.—"Faust" revived for four weeks.

Oct. 22nd.—Grand spectacular production of "The Doge of Venice," adapted by Bayle Bernard, from Byron's "Marino Faliero." The Doge, Phelps. A disastrous failure, involving the management in a loss of £5,000. Miscellaneous performances and customary starring tour.

Season 1868-9.—Sept. 23rd.—"King o' Scots." Grand spectacular production, adapted by Andrew Halliday (Duff) from Sir Walter Scott's "Fortunes of Nigel." The King and Trapbois (the miser) by Phelps. The heroine by Miss Caroline Heath. It was during this season Mr. Wilson Barrett made his first appearance in London.

Phelps alternated Othello and Iago with Charles Dillon, and also played Hotspur to the Falstaff of the latter.

1869-70. — Phelps still under engagement to Chatterton. Was banished from Drury Lane during the run of "Formosa" (in which Mr. Irving made his first appearance at this theatre), and played a series of engagements, commencing Sept. 16th, at Sadlers Wells (see "Narrative," Chapter VI., Part 2), after which he appeared at the Surrey, under the management of Shepherd and Creswick; at Astley's under the management of E. T. Smith; and at various provincial theatres.

End of this season a rupture occurred between Phelps and Chatterton.

Phelps went to the Queen's with Labouchere, played a round of his parts, notably Bottom the Weaver, in spectacular production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," which was highly success-

ful. Here he also shared with the management, his share averaging upwards of £200 a week.

1870-1.—Phelps and Chatterton were reconciled. The former joined the latter at the Princess's, where he played during the season Sir Pertinax, Falstaff, in a get-up of "The Merry Wives," and Mephistopheles in Boucicault's adaptation of Michel Carrè's, "Faust and Marguerite."

Sept. 16th.—Returned to Drury Lane for Isaac of York, in grand spectacular production of "Ivanhoe." Phelps remained at Drury Lane till November, when he returned to Princess's.

Nov. 30th.—He appeared as Dexter Sanderson in Watts Phillips' drama "On the Jury." This was the only modern part Phelps ever created, except Rophino—Lacy's "Doing for the Best" at Sadlers Wells. Dexter Sanderson was a small nineteenth century copy (a long way after the original) of Sir Pertinax. The drama was a success.

1872.—Opened with "Othello"; Iago, Creswick. During this engagement Phelps broke down in Sir Pertinax, and never acted again with Chatterton.

After a prolonged rest Phelps joined Hollingshead at the Gaiety, Dec. 20th, 1873, where he opened in Doctor Cantwell to the greatest business ever known in the theatre (see Mr. Hollingshead's statement, Chap. VI., Part 2).

Dec. 26th.—Job Thornberry in conjunction with Herman Vezin, Charles Mathews, Toole, Lionel Brough, and Miss Farren.

For nearly four years, off and on, Phelps remained at the Gaiety, repeating at intervals his most famous parts. The only especially noteworthy event was the production of "The Merry Wives of Windsor," with Sullivan's music, and a song written by Algernon Swinburne.

1876.—He joined me Sept. 16th at the Queen's Theatre for my production of Henry V. As this was the last great production with which he was associated, I subjoin the following copy of the opening bill :—

QUEEN'S THEATRE.

SOLE LESSEE AND MANAGER : JOHN COLEMAN.

Commencement of the Winter Season.

NOTICE.

During the Recess the whole Constructive and Decorative Character of the Theatre has been altered, a new Proscenium erected with Arched Dome, and spacious Retiring Rooms for the Stalls added ; the whole designed and carried out under the direction of Mr. J. C. Phipps, architect. The Tympanum of the Proscenium Arch has been painted by Mr. Telbin, and the figure subject by Mr. Absolon. Mr. Telbin has also kindly "touched up" the magnificent Act Drop painted by his late father.

Saturday, September 16th, 1876, and every Evening at 7 p.m., until further notice.

An adaptation of Shakespere's play of

"*Henry V.*"

Preceded by a Prologue taken from the Second Part of Henry IV.,

in which the eminent tragedian, Mr. PHELPS, will sustain the part of King Henry IV.

Mr. Coleman as the Prince of Wales, afterwards Henry V.

The entire Archæology of the Play has been under the superintendence of Mr. E. W. Godwin, F.S.A.

THE GRAND INCIDENTAL BALLETS,

"*The Falcon Chase*," and "*The Twelve Angels*,"

Invented and produced by M. Leon Espinosa.

SCENERY AND SCENIC EFFECTS

Designed and Painted by Messrs. George Gordon and Harford, and numerous assistants.

COSTUMES.

For the English King and Court, also for the French King and Court, by Mr. S. May. For the Peers and Peeresses, Maids of Honour, Pages, Minstrels, &c., by the Misses Smelt. For the "Falcon Chase," suggested by M. Espinosa, designed by M. Faustin, and executed by Mons. and Madame Alias.

ARMOUR.

For Kings, Princes and Knights, and the Regalia for the Coronation, by Messrs. Kennedy, of Birmingham, and Mr. Phillips, of London.

CHORUS,

As Clio, the Muse of History, Miss Leighton, in which character she will speak an Inaugural Address, written by Robert Buchanan.

PROLOGUE.

Henry IV.	(King of England)		Mr. Phelps.
Henry (Prince of Wales)	His Sons.		Mr. Coleman.
Humphrey (of Gloucester)			Mr. Sandford.
Thomas (of Clarence)			Mr. H. Jordan.
John (of Lancaster)			Mr. Percival.
Thomas Beaufort	(Duke of Exeter)		Mr. Warren.
The Duke of York	(Cousin to the King)		Mr. White.
Ralph Neville	(Earl of Westmoreland)		Mr. Isaacson.
Chichely	(Archbishop of Canterbury)		Mr. Alexander.
The Bishop of Ely			Mr. Leniers.
The Mitred Abbot of Westminster			Mr. Facon.

Sir William Gascoyne	(Lord Chief Justice of the King's Bench)	Mr John Ryder.
John Mowbray . .	(The Earl Marshal)	Mr. Bonsor.
Nym. . . .	(Irregular Humorists)	Mr. Philip Gordon.
Bardolph . . .		Mr. F. B. Egan.
Pistol . . .		Mr. T. Mead.
Boy	(Servant to them)	Miss Kate Phillips.
Dame Quickly	(Hostess of the "Boar's Head")	Mrs. Hudson Kirby.

THE PLAY.—ENGLISH.

Henry V. .	(King of England). . .	Mr. Coleman.
Thomas Montacute	(Earl of Salisbury) . .	Mr. De Vere.
Richard Beauchamp	(Earl of Warwick) . .	Mr. Donton.
William . .	(Sire de Willoughby) .	Mr. Jones.
Earl of Huntingdon	. . . . .	Mr. Brunton.
William de la Pole	(Earl of Suffolk) . .	Mr. Yates.
John Cornwall . .	(Lord Stanhope) .	Mr. Sharpe.

Princes, Peers, and Prelates as in the foregoing.

Sir Thomas Erpingham	. . . . .	Mr. Henry.
Captain Fluellen	(Officers in the King's Army) . .	Mr. Morton.
Captain Gower . .		Mr. Gardner.
Pistol. . .	(Ancient in the same) . .	Mr. T. Mead.
Williams . .	(Soldiers in the same)	Mr. John Ryder.
Bates . .		Mr. Egan.
English Heralds	. . .	Messrs. Wilson and Hinton.

FRENCH.

Charles VI. .	(King of France) .	Mr. Frank Kilpack.
Lewis . .	(The Dauphin) .	Mr. J. Denis Coyne.
The Duke of Burgundy	. . . . .	Mr. Distin.
Charles . .	(Duke of Orleans)	Mr. Clifford Harrison.
Charles d'Albret	(High Constable of France)	Mr Reginald Moore.
The Lord Bouciqualt	. . . . .	Mr. Clark.
Count Grandpré	. . . . .	Mr. Watson.
The Sieur de Gaucourt	(Governor of Harfleur) .	Mr. Regan.
A French Knight	("de la bonne maison")	M. Alexandre Lemoine.
Montjoy . . .	(The French Herald) .	Mr. Harwood.

Heralds, Nobles, Knights, and Men-at-Arms.

Isabel of Bavaria . (Queen of France) . Miss Marie Kean.
The Princess Katharine { Daughter of Charles & Isabel } Miss Emily Fowler
Alice { Principal Maid of Honour to the Princess } Miss Patty Chapman.

SCENE.—Partly in England and partly in France.

NOTICE.

As many of the set scenes are of great magnitude, especially the "Interior of Westminster Abbey," public indulgence is requested for such delays between the acts as may be found necessary during the first week of this production.

After this Phelps acted occasionally at the Gaiety Matinées, at the Crystal Palace, or the Alexandra, and I believe in Dublin.

In February, 1878, he commenced his first, and alas! his last engagement at the Imperial, then under the management of Miss Lytton and Mr. Wybrow Robertson.

Subjoined is a copy of the bill of the last performance he ever gave :—

"ROYAL AQUARIUM THEATRE, WESTMINSTER.
Under the management of Miss LYTTON,
To-day (Thursday) and Friday, February 28th, and March 1st, 1878, at Three o'clock precisely, Shakespere's play of
"HENRY VIII."
Concluding with "The Fall of Cardinal Wolsey."

King Henry VIII. . . . . Mr. William Rignold.
Cardinal Wolsey . . . . . Mr. Phelps.

Cardinal Campeius, Mr. Gardiner; Earl of Surrey, Mr. E. F. Edgar; Duke of Buckingham, Mr. Charles Warner; Duke of Norfolk, Mr. W. Ryder; Duke of Suffolk, Mr. H. J. Barrett;

Lord Sands, Mr. F. Barsby; Cromwell, Mr. Norman Forbes; Lord Chamberlain, Mr. Beaumont; Surveyor to the Duke of Buckingham, Mr. R. Norman; Sir Henry Guilford, Mr. Pool; Brandon, Mr. J. Johnstone; Sir Thomas Lovell, Mr. J. Dewar; Queen Katherine, Miss L. Moodie; Anne Bullen, Miss Edith Challis; An Old Lady, Miss Miller.

Wednesday and Saturday, February 27th and March 2nd, Mr. Phelps will appear as Richelieu."

L'ENVOI.

"Last scene of all
That ends this strange, eventful history."

FATAL BREAK DOWN AT THE IMPERIAL—ILLNESS AND DEATH—SCENE AT HIGHGATE—AT REST.

IT is easy to be wise after the event, but it is only too obvious now, that, towards the termination of his career, Mr. Phelps would have best consulted his own dignity, and the conservation of his fame, had he said, with his great precursor, "the noblest Roman of them all' —

"But years steal on, and higher duties crave
Some space between the theatre and the grave."

We are, however, unfortunately only too ready to believe that all men are mortal except ourselves, and he had so long defied the inroads of time, so long resisted the insidious encroachments of ill-health, that he continued to tempt his fate, until he was at last stricken down in harness.

It was during his engagement at the Imperial

Theatre, referred to in the preceding chapter, that the catastrophe occurred.

He had always a superstitious dread of the word "farewell."

At the time of Salvini's desertion, I urged Phelps to play his farewell engagement, but he refused, alleging that he had dreamt that he should die on the stage if he attempted a farewell speech.

During the performance of Henry VIII., while acting Wolsey, while actually uttering the ominous words —

> "Farewell! a long farewell to all my greatness!"

he broke down, in utter collapse, and the curtain as it slowly descended shut him out from the public gaze for ever.

His presentiment had been realized in a manner he never dreamt of, and the "farewell" he could never teach his tongue to speak the poet had spoken for him.

Congestion of the brain ensued on this attack.

He retired to Epping to recuperate, rallied, came back to town, even contemplated playing a farewell engagement at Drury Lane; a relapse occurred, he returned to his beloved Epping, where he was seized with dyspnæa and violent pains in the side.

Another attack of congestion supervened, which culminated in hallucinations and almost total un-

consciousness, until Wednesday, November 6th, 1878, when, surrounded by his children, and in the arms of his oldest and dearest friend, Mr. Henry Plowman, he passed peacefully and unconsciously away in the seventy-fifth year of his age.

His latest medical adviser stated in the *Lancet* that "Mr. Phelps suffered from no organic disease, but simply from a worn-out nervous system, due to over-exertion of his mental faculties, and the wear and tear of his profession."

That no element of romance might be wanting to complete this romantic career, the undertakers lost their way on the road to Epping, and were many hours too late; in fact, they did not arrive till midnight, and it was past two in the morning when they set forth to return to London.

Mr. Plowman, who remained to render the last pious offices, in his anxiety had omitted to provide a conveyance for himself; hence he had to travel to town

"In the dead vast and middle of the night"

seated upon the hearse.

When all that was mortal of my beloved friend was borne to his last resting-place at Highgate, along the whole road the shops were closed, and

the blinds of nearly all the private houses were drawn down.

It was a bitter day in early winter, but though the wind pierced to the bones, though the rain fell in one persistent drizzling downpour, thousands and thousands of people defied both wind and rain to do honour to his memory.

When the funeral procession approached the cemetery, every head was bared, every voice was hushed, and a great awe fell upon the multitude.

The most conspicuous figure among the crowd of relatives, actors, authors, journalists, painters, sculptors, musicians, soldiers, doctors, barristers, and clergymen who gathered round the grave was that of the dead man's old partner, Tom Greenwood, who bore his fourscore years as bravely as old memories would let him. Beside him, on either side, stood two of the great actor's oldest friends and comrades, Henry Marston and John Ryder. Both partner and comrades were destined soon to follow after, there, where even —

> "Golden lads and lasses must
> As chimney-sweepers come to dust."

Strangest sight of all was the concourse of women of all ages and all stations who came to pay the homage of their heartfelt grief, and to bestrew his grave with flowers.

It was a day, the silence and the sadness whereof were things never to be forgotten by those who witnessed them.

No painted pomp, no splendid pageant, could ever have realized a scene so touching in the tenderness of its sympathy, so sublime in the depth of its unostentatious sorrow.

"After life's fitful fever, he sleeps well" beside her who shared his early trials and his manhood's triumphs, and now he —

> "Fears no more the heat o' the sun,
> Nor the furious winter's rages;
> For his worldly task is done,
> Home he's gone and ta'en his wages;"

but so long as the name and fame of our master, the poet player, endure, so long will the name of Samuel Phelps be remembered as "our great captain's captain," as his champion in an age of darkness and depression, of decadence and irreverence; and when the history of the English Drama in the nineteenth century comes to be written, by a more skilful pen than mine, the story of his trials, his struggles, and his extraordinary achievements must ever claim a foremost place.

THE END.